

# GENERAL THOMAS



Thomas

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# Great Commanders

*EDITED BY JAMES GRANT WILSON*

GENERAL THOMAS

## The Great Commanders Series.

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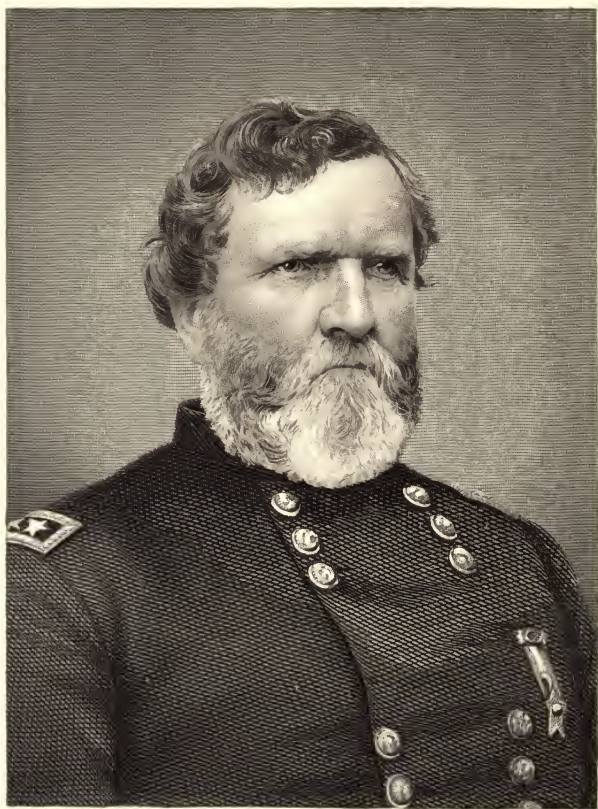
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*Gen H Thomas*

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GREAT COMMANDERS



# GENERAL THOMAS

BY

HENRY COPPÉE, LL. D.

PROFESSOR IN THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY, AND FORMERLY AN OFFICER  
OF ARTILLERY IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY



NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1893



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TO THE  
MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS OF THE  
ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND  
WHO FELL WHILE FIGHTING WITH THOMAS,  
AND TO THE NOBLE SURVIVORS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO  
HIS RENOWN AND CHERISH HIS MEMORY





## PREFACE.

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WHEN I undertook, at the request of the editor, to write a biographical sketch of General George H. Thomas, as one of the series of Great American Commanders, I soon found that my chief difficulty would be to condense within the small compass of a work like this the different portions of the great history in which he played a distinguished part. It was manifest that the battles in which he commanded in person, and those in which under other commanders he held a very prominent place, must, of course, be more elaborately described. Those in which he had only a subordinate position need only such partial notice as will show what he individually did. These latter are fully portrayed in the other volumes of the series, containing the lives of those generals who commanded in them. And yet even in such cases enough must be shown of the general field to enable the reader to see the relation sustained by the subject of our sketch to the other participants in the action.

To illustrate: Mill Springs and Nashville must

be written out in full—they belong to Thomas. Chickamauga requires a great deal of attention, because there, although another was in command, he stemmed the rushing tide and saved the day. At Chattanooga also, although Grant was in command, Thomas played so prominent a part that the whole field must be kept before the reader in order to appreciate his great achievements there. Thus it may happen, unavoidably, that the same field will be described in several works of the series, but as far as possible this will be avoided. Without entering into further details, thus much has been said on this point in order that the reader may not look here for what is to be found elsewhere, well done by competent hands. I would mention also as a bar in judgment of the work that the name of the critics is legion ; every intelligent man who was in a battle has a word to say with regard to at least that portion of the field in which he served.

Many vital authorities are not yet within the historian's reach ; such as are, are extremely voluminous, and impose a severe task of examination. Nor can there be left out of the account the prejudiced and contradictory claims of rival commanders, with their trains of followers, more persistent than the chiefs themselves.

It is more than probable, therefore, that I have fallen into errors and made mistakes in spite of the strongest desire to avoid them. Wherever this is

shown, I stand ready and anxious to correct them and make the amend. My chief object has been to show what General Thomas was and what he did, not by odious comparisons with other generals, but in the light of a shining record, unrivaled in the history of the war.

To General John M. Schofield, Commander in Chief of the Army, I am indebted for a copy of that famous work, *The War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. It is a monument of industry and painstaking, with no rival in war records. With it alone the book might have been written. Without it, it could not have been.

General William F. Smith, U. S. A., kindly furnished me some papers and information, especially concerning the campaign of Chattanooga, in which he bore so distinguished a part.

General Thomas J. Wood has given me valuable information concerning Chickamauga and Chattanooga, in both which he commanded a division with great skill and gallantry.

To Colonel Sanford C. Kellogg, U. S. A., I owe some important suggestions and the correction of certain errors into which I had fallen.

My thanks are due to General James H. Wilson for corrections and suggestions, mainly with reference to the campaign of Nashville, in which he played so splendid a part, and to Major William H.

Lambert for the loan of letters and material. The latter has the finest and most complete collection of relics, letters, and authorities written and published with reference to General Thomas which exists.

Many other friends have given me counsel and aid, but they are none of them responsible for the use I have made of such assistance.

I have appended to the account of each battle extracts from the reports of both Union and Confederate commanders.

H. C.



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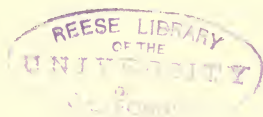
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And many minor works.

# GENERAL THOMAS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE AND MEXICAN WAR.

Parentage and birthplace—Huguenot and cavalier—Mechanical taste—Enters a law office—Offered an appointment as cadet by the Hon. Mr. Mason—Life at West Point—Graduated in 1840—Florida War—Brevet first lieutenant—Stationed at Charleston, Baltimore, and other posts—Mexican War—With General Taylor—At Fort Brown—Monterey—Brevet captain—Buena Vista—Brevet major—Sword presented by citizens of Southampton County, Va.

THE following pages have been written to set forth the principal events in the life of a man who, in the words of his classmate and comrade, General Sherman (in the General Order announcing his death to the army), “never wavered in battle; who was firm and full of faith in his cause; who never sought advancement of rank or honor at the expense of any one; who was the very impersonation of honesty, integrity, and honor; and who stands as the beau ideal of the soldier and gentleman.”

This eulogium, written immediately after his death, strikes with a ringing tone the keynote for the bi-

ographer. Let it be added, if any further praise be needed, that he was modest and retiring; that he sought nothing for himself by politic and pedantic means; that he never lost a battle, but won several splendid victories; that he did not receive the full meed of advancement and praise due to his merits during his life; and that, feeling this, he declared that "time and history would do him justice." Such is the character which it is sought to present to the world in this sketch of his life, with the claim for him of that justice at least from history to which he confided his reputation.

GEORGE HENRY THOMAS was born in Southampton County, Virginia, on July 31, 1816. This county is in the southeastern part of the State, bordering on North Carolina, and separated from the Atlantic by only three intervening counties. It was thus a more secluded region than northern Virginia. His father, John Thomas, lived in one of the few settlements, and was of English lineage, or rather of Welsh ancestry, that came to this country after some residence in England. John Thomas is remembered as a man strong in body and mind, of perfect honesty of purpose and decision of character. His mother, Elizabeth Rochelle, was descended from one of those Huguenot families which were driven out of France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV, and some of whom were very glad to find an asylum in America. Not much is known

of the Thomas family, but the little that has come to our notice informs us that they had inherited the traditions and the prestige of both the Cavaliers and the Huguenots; that they were well-to-do and eminently respectable, ranking among the best people in that part of Virginia.

His father died (so it is recorded in General Thomas's policy of insurance) at forty-five years, as the result of an accident, and his mother at sixty, curiously enough also by an accident. He had three sisters and two brothers, of whose history little is known but that they were the general's relatives; they were a quiet, retired family, and he was an uncommonly reticent man, who did not speak much of his domestic affairs.

After the opening of the civil war, and upon his deciding to remain in the United States service, there seems to have been an entire separation between him and his family, with the probable exception of his brother Benjamin, with whom he was on good terms after the war, in Tennessee, and who was the only one he saw after the year 1860. The family were in possession of a goodly home property, on which the surviving members still reside; these are two sisters.

Such attempts as have been made to collect incidents of his boyhood have not been very successful. General Howard, when he was writing the sketch of his life for the Loyal Legion, wrote to his sisters on



April 12, 1890, for reminiscences of his early life, but failed to elicit the desired information. One of his schoolmates pithily describes him as a boy of few words and of an excellent spirit. An old negro named Artise remembered him as secretly trying to teach the little negroes to read, contrary to the judgment of his father. He is represented to have been of a mechanical turn; to have made a saddle and several pieces of house furniture. A quiet and thoughtful boy, there is doubtless little more to say about him. He lived a secluded life, with very few companions. The educational advantages of that region were not great, but such as they were young Thomas availed himself of them to the utmost. He went through his preliminary studies at a private institution called the Southampton Academy, and in his nineteenth year he became a student of the law. His taste for mechanics, which increased in his later life, was constantly exercised, and was to be very useful to him in his military career. His mother's brother, James Rochelle, was at this time clerk of the court of Southampton County; he appointed his nephew, George Thomas, to be his deputy, and the young man performed the duties of this office while he was continuing his legal studies.

It is thus probable that young Thomas would have become a country lawyer and have spent his life at his paternal home; but an event now occurred which changed his destiny. In the spring of 1836

John Y. Mason, a member of Congress from Virginia, was empowered to appoint a cadet at West Point for his district. His attention was called to this well-grown and clever youth, the nephew and the deputy of the County Clerk of Southampton; and he spoke of the appointment to his uncle, Mr. Rochelle. The boy was sent for and offered the warrant; it was left to his own judgment; he accepted it at once and began his preparations to go to West Point. On his way to the Military Academy he stopped at Washington to thank Mr. Mason again. That gentleman expressed himself very curtly: "No cadet from my district," he said, "has ever graduated at the Military Academy. If you do not, I never want to see your face again."

He entered West Point on June 1, 1836. There is but little diversity in the life of a cadet. He lives an almost conventual life, shut out from the world and subjected to rigorous order and discipline, the like of which no young men in this country encounter elsewhere. The days are filled up with drills, lessons, and parades. With the exception of two months' furlough at the end of the second year, there are absolutely no vacations. Soldiering there is not play, but business, and the consequence is, great transformations take place in the four years' course. Untutored boys become military men and courtly gentlemen, and West Point vindicates herself with every annual class that she graduates.

There is little to relate of his cadet life. He fell easily and obediently into the routine of duty. He is remembered as a steady student, not learning very rapidly, but never losing what he learned ; developing slowly and strongly. On June 20, 1840, he was graduated twelfth in a class of forty-five. Among his classmates were Paul O. Hébert, later Governor of Louisiana, William T. Sherman, Stewart Van Vliet, and others whose names are well known in the military history of the country. From these gentlemen we learn that while at the academy he was reticent and introspective, dignified and serious, a solid man, never hasty in judgment or expression, but always just and considerate of others. To his special friends he was "Old Thom," easy-going and reliable.

After his graduation in June, 1840, he received the usual furlough until the autumn. His first commission was that of second lieutenant in the Third Artillery. He joined his regiment at Fort Columbus, Governor's Island, New York Harbor, but he did not remain there long. The Florida War, caused by the attempted removal of the Indians from that territory, was still dragging along its fitful existence ; sometimes it burst forth into spasmodic flame, and anon its embers were smoldering and smoking. In October of that same year Thomas was sent to join that portion of his regiment which was already there in the Everglades of Florida, a swampy land of water

and hummocks, given over to alligators, miasma, moccasins, ticks, and mosquitoes. It was hard soldiering and little glory. Troops in civilized countries march on roads; in this Indian warfare they were obliged to fight in pathless swamps, where only the Indian can make his way from tree to tree.

The following letter, now first published, written by Thomas to his friend and classmate Kingsbury, gives a very vivid glimpse of the man and his activity during the Florida War. It is curious to find him saying, "This will be the only opportunity I shall have of distinguishing myself, and not to be able to avail myself of it is too bad." We who were then at West Point as cadets were also very fearful that the Florida War would end without giving us a chance.

[COPY.]

"FORT LAUDERDALE, E. F., *July* 25, 1841.

"DEAR KINGSBURY: Owing to the quantity of business on my hands at this time, I have not been able to answer yours of the 22d May before.

"What do you ordnance officers do for quartermasters and commissaries? Do you do the duty yourselves, or have you staff officers at your arsenals to perform those duties?

"My duties at this post are so many that my whole time is taken up. I have to do the duty of commissary, quartermaster, ordnance officer, and

adjutant; and if I find time to eat my meals, I think myself most infernal fortunate.

“So the Democrat was not dismissed after all; you have, however, got him away from Watervliet, which must be some consolation at least. Old Van has become so much pleased with line duty that I hardly think he could be bribed to accept an appointment in a staff corps. I saw him yesterday; he came down in the boat with Major Childs, who has gone to Fort Dallas, below this place, with sixty men from his post and sixty from here, for the purpose of making an expedition into the Everglades to oust Sam Jones from his cornfields. I think it highly probable that they may do something if they will go to work properly, for the Indians are there, I know, as we have frequently seen their fires at night, and they do not expect to see any of our men there at this season of the year; therefore, if the major will only manage the affair well, he may add fresh laurels to those he has already won. I have been left behind to take care of this infernal place in consequence of being commissary, etc.

“This will be the only opportunity I shall have of distinguishing myself, and not to be able to avail myself of it is too bad. They say at St. Augustine that the Third will be ordered to Old Point this fall, but there have been so many sayings of the kind this summer that I begin to have no faith in them.

“Colonel Worth has been on a grand scout, but

did not succeed in discovering any fields or Indians. Major Childs thinks that some regiment of infantry will come to these lower posts this fall, and we will be concentrated at Fort Pierce preparatory to a grand expedition to the Okechobee, where they think the whole Indian force has retired as the last point of safety.

"I am glad you exposed the doings of those people of the Academic Board; they deserve something worse than exposition to the Engineer Department.

"I have not heard from Gardiner or Martin yet; what they are doing I can not learn. Hébert has written only once since my arrival in Florida; he had just then returned from furlough. From his accounts I should say that he had been enjoying himself in fine style.

"I have just heard that poor Job Lancaster has been killed by lightning. I have heard no news lately which has distressed me more, for he was one of the very best of men. Wardwell is also dead; he had the fever which has been prevailing in the western part of the territory. You must write again soon. Yours truly,

" (Signed)      GEORGE H. THOMAS.

"Lieutenant C. P. KINGSBURY, U. S. A., *Wateruliet Arsenal,*  
*Wateruliet, N. Y.*"\*

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\* I am indebted to the courtesy of Major William H. Lambert, of Philadelphia, for the use of this letter.

Thomas joined Major Richard D. A. Wade's command in his campaign against the Seminoles in time to take an active part in the capture of seventy Indians on November 6, 1841. This was his first battle service, and so well was it performed that he received the warm thanks of Major Wade, who commanded in the action, and of Colonel (afterward General) Worth, who was in command of all the troops in Florida at that time.

The mention that he received in the dispatches of these officers gained for him the brevet rank of first lieutenant in the army "for gallantry and good conduct against the Florida Indians." Few persons realize the dangers and hardships of Indian warfare. It is indeed an inglorious service. Death by an arrow is ignoble in comparison of that in "the imminent deadly breach" amid "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." The savages are treacherous and cruel. They lie in ambush, they tear off the scalp, they torture the prisoners; add to this the character of the Indian country in Florida, the reeking miasmas of the Everglades, and we shall see that few men have received adequate rewards for such service. Fortunately for Thomas, he did not remain long in that region. First he was ordered on temporary duty to New Orleans Barracks in 1842, and very soon after to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, opposite Fort Sumter, a locality before long to be famous.

So small was our army at that time, and so wide



the range of country, that the young officer was your true peripatetic philosopher, traveling for the most time in high-pressure steamboats or on bad roads in broken-down stage coaches. He was also a social personage wherever he went, invited everywhere, and considered, by virtue of his commission, a gentleman of the first rank. Thomas shared in the gayeties of Charleston for a short time, performing his routine duties at Fort Moultrie, but in 1843 he was ordered to Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, and there the handsome and accomplished young soldier was a very acceptable person in the gay and delightful society of Baltimore, always renowned for its charming hospitality. He is still remembered there as a dignified and courteous gentleman and a very handsome officer. The story of his service and his honors in Florida gave him additional social distinction. But he was not permitted to linger long in that pleasant place; after less than two years' stay he was detailed on recruiting service, in 1845, to New York city.

Such a "detail" is considered choice duty, and is sought for by most officers; but an event was now to occur in our history which required the more active services of the whole army and a considerable force of volunteers—militia mustered into the service of the United States. The army itself was increased from nine regiments of infantry to sixteen; a third regiment of dragoons was created, and also a regi-

ment of mounted riflemen. The young soldier was now to have a new and better opportunity to exercise his powers and display his prowess. What was this new and portentous cloud which so suddenly arose?

It had become manifest, for many reasons, some of them purely political, and some of them the issue of the inexorable logic of events, that a conflict with our Southern neighbor Mexico was in the immediate future. This is not the place to consider the causes and the justice of that war. A strong party opposed it. The poet James Russell Lowell lampooned it in the "Biglow Papers"; but the people favored it because it gave a new expansion to our territory and a new glory to our annals. Wild and adventurous Americans, aided by traitorous Mexicans, had claimed that Texas was independent; the United States had favored their claims, had recognized the asserted independence, and had then annexed Texas to the Union. Mexico refused to accept this action, and insisted upon retaining her territory intact. An American army of observation and occupation was encamped under General Taylor at Corpus Christi. This officer, well and fortunately chosen to command our forces, was a man of revolutionary lineage and a young hero in the War of 1812. When the troubles with Mexico began he was colonel of the First Infantry, and, although sixty-one years of age, a man in the

full vigor of life. With little early education, he was a soldier by instinct and practice, and was to earn a large fame by his good generalship and splendid valor in Mexico. The force under his command being transformed into an *army of invasion*, it marched to the Rio Grande to meet a Mexican army which had been sent thither to resist the movements of General Taylor. There was a show of justice on either side; but what did not appear in any manifesto was the hope of the Southern leaders to extend the territory in which the system of slavery might be continued, and to maintain that supremacy in the Government which the South felt it was gradually and surely losing.

But to the young soldier of that time the questions of the justice and morality of that war did not present itself. He was a sworn defender of the nation, and it was the nation's quarrel. He cared nothing for causes of war and knew little of political schemes and sectional disputes. Besides, he saw in that war an opportunity which had been rare, and promised to be rarer, to display his heroism and be crowned with military honor. He seized it with avidity and entered upon this new career of hope and promise.

There had been no declaration of war; the actual war began with the first bloodshed. Immediately thereafter General Taylor, having marched up the river, left a force consisting of eight companies of

infantry and artillery and several guns on the left bank of the Rio Grande to take post and intrench itself opposite the city of Matamoros. The earth-works thrown up there were called Fort Brown, in honor of the commanding officer, Major Jacob Brown. Returning to Point Isabel he made his preparations for advance. With his main body, consisting of about thirty-five hundred men, the general marched from Point Isabel to meet the Mexican force which was coming down the left bank slowly from Matamoros. The armies encountered each other midway between Fort Brown and Point Isabel, at Palo Alto, on the 6th of May, 1846. There a cautious and experimental battle was fought, with no decided results, except that the Mexicans had fallen back a little to a place called Resaca de la Palma, and the troops of both armies rested upon their arms during the night. On the 7th, beginning with the early dawn, a furious battle was fought which resulted in the entire defeat of the Mexicans.

Meantime the garrison at Fort Brown, opposite Matamoros, was in great straits. Should the Mexicans be successful, there is little doubt that they would all be massacred, and they were in this critical condition from the 3d to the 9th of May. They were furiously cannonaded from Matamoros; they heard the cannon of Palo Alto, and when it ceased and there was no Mexican retreat their hopes sank. The early guns of Resaca greeted their ears,

and as the day passed fugitives from the Mexican force began to appear. At last they saw the complete rout; every gun in Fort Brown was then trained upon them and hastened their flight.

Fort Brown was relieved, Matamoros was evacuated, and occupied at once by our conquering army. Major Brown was killed during the siege, and Lieutenant Thomas, who was serving with that contingent under the immediate command of Bragg, shared the extreme dangers and the great honor of that siege. Fort Brown in time became a large town, and is now known as Brownsville, robbing Matamoros of its prestige and progress.

Thomas moved with the army of General Taylor up the river, commanding a section of light artillery in the van. Diverging from the Rio Grande at Camargo, the force marched inland to Monterey, where he found and joined his company of the Third Artillery. He was again distinguished in the attack on that stronghold. It is related that he was ordered to withdraw his guns from a particularly exposed spot. With characteristic coolness he ordered them to be loaded, and in the midst of the heavy fire gave the enemy a farewell shot and retired slowly. He was complimented in orders by his immediate commander, General Henderson, and by the division commander, General Twiggs. For his gallantry and good conduct at Monterey he received a second brevet as captain. The next step in his career is in connection

with the story of Buena Vista, a rare and glorious event in our military annals.

General Taylor had advanced to a spot near Saltillo in expectation of meeting a large army under Santa Anna intended to crush him and the American occupancy from that region. Most unfortunately, Taylor's army was greatly decreased just when it seemed essential to retain every man in order to stem the Mexican torrent. It happened in this wise: General Scott was completing an armament with which to proceed on a new line from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico. In order to do this he withdrew, by permission of the War Department, nearly all the regular troops from General Taylor, thus leaving him with a force of only five thousand men, mostly volunteers. The situation was grave in the extreme. Santa Anna was in array before him with an army of twenty thousand of the best Mexican troops. He sent a letter to Taylor demanding surrender, which the latter very curtly refused. Then came shock upon shock; masses were hurled against him; with his flank imperiled and a part of his forces driven back, but with a grim tenacity Taylor refused to be beaten. Then Santa Anna weakly sent another flag to ask him what he wanted. This was simply amusing, and was the prelude to the sudden withdrawal of the Mexican army in full march toward the capital. There are few fields of battle more glorious in history than that of Buena Vista.

It reminds one of Poitiers and Agincourt, where a few English soldiers confronted three times their numbers of French. It was there that originated General Taylor's sobriquet of "Rough and Ready." There was also given, or we like to think was given, the epigrammatic order, "A little more grape, Captain Bragg." These words became watch words, and Buena Vista made General Taylor president.

But to come back to Thomas. There were two batteries of light artillery on that field, commanded respectively by Braxton Bragg and T. W. Sherman. Thomas had been in command of one of them from November 21, 1846, to February 14, 1847, because Bragg had been promoted to a captaincy and had taken another battery. At the latter date Captain T. W. Sherman came and relieved him in command. During the battle he was thus acting as first lieutenant of the battery, and he received the plaudits of his captain, T. W. Sherman, who reported that he had more than sustained his reputation as an accurate and scientific artillerist.

General Wool, second in command under Taylor, said: "We are mainly indebted for the great victory to the service of the artillery officers. Without our artillery," he said, "we could not have maintained our position." And it may be added that General Taylor's sententious and magnificent notice of Bragg in the report of the battle sheds some luster also upon Bragg's comrades of the artillery. In

speaking of his invaluable services he uses these words, conceived in the enthusiastic spirit of Napier in the Peninsular War: "Without infantry to support him and at the imminent risk of losing his guns [Bragg] came rapidly into action, the Mexican lines being but a few yards from the muzzles of his pieces. The first discharge of canister caused the enemy to hesitate; the second and third drove him back in disorder and saved the day." \*

For thus assisting to save the day at Buena Vista, Thomas was brevetted a major in the army, and a man with three brevets for service in front of the enemy was at that time a marked man.

He honored the army, and was honored in turn by the citizens in his own county in Virginia, who met at Jerusalem Court House, July 19, 1847, in a public gathering, and in an enthusiastic meeting drew up a series of complimentary resolutions speaking

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\* The reviewer of General Howard's *Life of Taylor*, of this series, in the journal of the Military Service Institution for March, 1893, makes a decided discount upon the claims of the United States army on this field. He says Santa Anna's forces were very much worn out on their arrival; that probably he had not more than twelve thousand men in action; and although he had a great preponderance of cavalry, there was a decided disparity between their weaker men and horses and our splendid dragoons. Taylor had the choice of ground; but, considering the known inequality between the two armies, the questions are pertinent, Why did he fight there in the open field? and Why not in fortifications in Saltillo? Wool, his second in command, declared that they were whipped and must retreat. Notwithstanding all this, however, Taylor refused to consider himself beaten, and held the field while his discomfited enemy retired with great rapidity.



of the military skill, bravery, and noble deportment of Major Thomas, and presented him with a handsome sword, engrossed on the scabbard with the names of the victories in which he had participated. He had given such large promise that it was manifest he was only in reserve for greater things whenever the Government should need military skill, valor, and power to command. Should the emergency come he would be sought for.

It must be said, however, that there did not seem to be then the slightest prospect of a call for such services. From the beginning of our history the Government has taken a very just and proper view of the military situation in time of peace. It has always reduced our army to a minimum. And so after the Mexican War the volunteers were disbanded and the extra regular regiments dropped. An opening for adventure was made by the acquisition of California, and all the world was awakened by the new cry, "Westward, ho!" For the officers then in service there seemed to be, however, no military future. And yet in the womb of Time that very future was in embryo. The victories in Mexico; the acquisition of California, New Mexico, and Arizona were the potent factors in bringing about this issue. The entrance of California as a free State in 1850 further disturbed the political equilibrium, and was a remote and faint usher of the great war which was to break out ten years later.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CAMPAIGN WITH PATTERSON.

A loyal Virginian—His features and appearance—His men trust him—Florida, Newport, Boston, West Point—Instructor of artillery and cavalry—His captaincy a Christmas gift—His marriage in 1855—Second Cavalry—The Kiowa Expedition, 1860—Secession—Temptations—Per contra—Decides to remain loyal—Accident at Norfolk—Defection of his seniors—At Carlisle—Joins Patterson—Bull Run—His view of Patterson's campaign.

PERHAPS this is the place, and while waiting for such an emergency, to describe the appearance of this man. He was cast in a strong and large mould, and had many of the personal traits of Washington, whom, in his intellectual and moral character, he greatly resembled. He was just six feet high and very well proportioned, without too much flesh;\* he was very erect. He had a walk which was at once military and easy; it was that of a man who marched straight to his purpose. Bright blue eyes, later in life somewhat sunken, changeable in expression from

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\* He weighed at this time about one hundred and seventy-five pounds, but he had reached, in August, 1867, the weight of two hundred and forty-six pounds.

mildness to strong purpose; a heavy overhanging brow, with a horizontal furrow at the base. His nose was well shaped and proportioned; he had firm-set lips falling a little at the extremities; a strong chin; light-brown waving hair and full but short beard. His head gave altogether the suggestion of a self-reliant man; dignified and courteous, asking little from others, but ready to impart much. When men first knew him they respected and feared him; on longer acquaintance, especially such as exists between a commander and his soldiers, they trusted and loved him. They learned to associate his appearance with sure victory and constant care for their comfort and safety.

The emergency spoken of was soon to occur. Until then he was leading the routine life of an officer in garrison and camp. To an active and studious mind such a life becomes irksome. How to pass the time is the question of the hour. Many officers seek amusement. On the frontier those who are sportsmen can pass their days with gun and rod and long excursions on horseback; others play billiards and talk; a few, like Thomas, spend their time in study of the profession, literally in time of peace preparing for war. Much of his time at frontier posts was also spent in the study of botany, mineralogy, and other branches of natural history. He sent many valuable specimens to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

After a short stay in camp at Brazos Santiago he was ordered again to Florida, where the embers of the Indian War were slowly dying out. Nothing of importance occurred to affect his record. Very soon we find him at Fort Independence, in Boston Harbor, whence he was ordered to Fort Adams, Newport, in December, 1848. In April, 1851, he was detailed for duty as Instructor of Artillery and Cavalry at the Military Academy, a position of great importance, at the head of a department, corresponding to a professorship. This officer commands the detachments of artillery and cavalry troops, besides instructing the cadets. The position is usually given to a captain, but, notwithstanding his numerous brevets, Major Thomas was still a first lieutenant, and as the army had again settled down to a peace establishment, promotion was very slow. Thus it happened that it was thirteen years after his graduation, and while he was stationed at West Point, that he received his promotion to a captaincy, a welcome Christmas gift on December 24, 1853.

Those who, like the writer of this sketch, served with him during his tour of duty at West Point, will readily recall his serious, practical, almost stern face; his stately form; his firm, martial tread; his cool and equable temper; his impartial justice; and withal his courteous bearing and kindly spirit toward the cadets, which they fully recognized and appreciated. He certainly taught them by example as well as by

precept ; with entire recognition of military law and regulations, he treated them as gentlemen of honor as well as soldiers.

We come now to another important event in his life. It was during his residence at West Point, on November 17, 1852, that he married a lady whom all army people had already learned to hold in great admiration and respect, Miss Frances L. Kellogg, of Troy, New York. Mrs. Kellogg, a widow and something of an invalid, had been for some time in the habit of spending a portion of every year at the West Point Hotel with her two daughters. The fascination of the elder, in appearance, culture, and an exceeding charm of conversation, won the affections of Major Thomas. Seldom is such a congenial union to be recorded. She was, like him, large and of stately presence ; she made for him a charming home, when he could be at home ; she entered into all his interests and made them her own ; treasured every incident of his famous career, and although separated for long periods by the war, she kept pace with his actions and was in perfect accord with his views and purposes.

After being made a captain in December, 1853, he proceeded to join his company on May 1, 1854, and while doing so to conduct a battalion of the Third Artillery to Benicia Barracks, California, which he reached *via* the Isthmus of Panama on the 1st of June : after a short stay he marched them

forward to Fort Yuma, where he remained until July 21, 1855. Dr. Murray, afterward surgeon general, accompanied him. Always studious and of an inquiring mind, he spent that year in learning to speak the Indian language of the tribes of that region. From Fort Yuma we find him transferred from duty to duty with a rapidity that required great activity on his part, and displayed that promptness of movement which is so excellent a quality in a commander. In the early spring of 1855 he was in garrison at Jefferson Barracks. It was while there that he received another promotion. In the reorganization of the cavalry service on May 12th of that year the following field officers were appointed for the Second Cavalry, all of them graduates of West Point, and Southern men: Albert Sidney Johnston, of Texas, Colonel; Robert E. Lee, of Virginia, Lieutenant Colonel; William J. Hardee, of Georgia, and George H. Thomas, of Virginia, Majors.

“General Thomas,” says Mr. Van Horn, “always believed that Mr. Davis had regard to a probable war between the Northern and Southern States in organizing that regiment.” Although his commission reached him at Jefferson Barracks, he had in fact been appointed while at Fort Yuma to fill an original vacancy in the Second Cavalry. He was then a junior captain of artillery. The reason of this promotion was as follows: It was Jefferson Davis’s regiment of the Mississippi Rifles that had

supported the batteries at Buena Vista; thus Davis knew and admired Thomas personally. It was due to this that when he was Secretary of War he gave him this promotion.

From 1855 to 1859 he had short tours of frontier duty at Fort Mason, Texas, San Antonio, and Fort Belknap. Being employed in the latter year to accompany the Texas Reserve Indians to the Indian Territory, he made such studies of natural science as were possible. In 1860 he took part in the Kiowa Expedition to the sources of the Concho and Colorado Rivers. It was during this expedition that the troops had a skirmish with the Indians on the Brazos River, near the junction of the Concho and Colorado Rivers—a predatory band not engaged in regular warfare but looking for plunder. In this skirmish on August 26, 1860, Major Thomas received a singular wound; an arrow passed through his chin and into his breast. It is more notable because, exposed as he was in after days and in so many fights, it was the only wound he ever received. It was not, however, sufficiently serious in itself to cause him to apply for a leave of absence. He wanted rest and deserved it, and on those grounds applied for leave for a year. It was granted, and he left his command on November 1, 1860. This was just before Lincoln's election, and was a time of serious deliberation to all thinking men in the country. Thomas was not a politician, but he might well

employ his leave in careful survey of the state of the nation.

Rapidly coming events had cast their portentous shadows before them. It was manifest that dissatisfaction at the South would lead to secession; and would not secession lead to war? Southern officers of the army, honest but perplexed in the extreme, were beginning to leave the service; some of them to take active part for their section, others limiting their allegiance to their State, others still hoping to remain neutral in the struggle. Vain hope!

The excitement increased in a rapid ratio. Men's consciences became deafened; men's reason was carried away in the whirlwind of political passion. The hatred of the sections became bitter and intense. The whole country was a mighty field of war, with two hostile encampments. The old cry was heard,

"Under which king, Bezonian? Speak or die."

No wonder that many a good man was shaken.

Professor Smyth, of Cambridge, in speaking of an analogous instance, illustrating the cool and fearless judgment of General Washington when the country was in danger of being embroiled in a foreign war by assisting France against the allies, uses these striking words: "The foundations of the moral world were shaken, but not the understanding of Washington."

Surely it is not going too far to apply them to the conduct of those Southern officers who remained



true to the Union in this struggle in spite of temptations and strong inducements to the contrary.

The time has come when we may calmly consider and analyze this question. It is easy for men after the act, and in view of the momentous results, to reason back calmly to that day of stormy conditions and doubting judgments. It is easy to condemn, but to the Southern men of that time it was indeed a portentous question. Let us take all things into consideration: The prestige of birth, the claims of family, the long-time conflict between State and National supremacy, the doubts and hopes that a peaceful solution might be reached, the fact that the best minds in Virginia were not in favor of the precipitate secession inaugurated by South Carolina, and that the State did not secede until April 17th. We may be sure that all these things, and many others, were carefully considered by Thomas.

In the reminiscences of General E. D. Keyes he expresses the conviction that the influence of Mrs. Thomas was potent to keep her husband in the Union ranks. With reference to this, Mrs. Thomas, in a letter to a friend dated November 9, 1884, says: "General Keyes's private opinion that I was the cause of General Thomas remaining in the service is decidedly a mistake. I do not think they met from the time General Thomas went to Kentucky to join that army until they met in San Francisco years after. There was never a word passed between

General Thomas and myself, or any one of the family, upon the subject of his remaining loyal to the United States Government. We felt that whatever his course, it would be from a conscientious sense of duty; that no one could persuade him to do what he felt was not right."

General Lee, who had been in favor of gradual emancipation, sadly resigned and received an appointment in Virginia. It is not known that any special offers were made by the Southern authorities to General Thomas, but Governor Letcher, of Virginia, had issued a general and urgent request to all officers of the army from Virginia to resign and take service for their State. After a careful and cautious review of the situation, Thomas determined to remain in the service of his country, and this conclusion was the more honorable, if possible, because it would cost him so much. He knew that he would receive bitter reproaches from all his Southern relations and friends on the one hand, and suspicions of his loyalty from the authorities at Washington on the other.

After receiving his wound on the Brazos River, and while on his way home, he met with another severe accident which seemed at first as if it would disable him for all further duty as a soldier. Near Lynchburg he jumped from a railway train and twisted his spine. He was six weeks confined to his bed in Norfolk, nursed by his faithful wife, who

joined him there. He recovered, but always felt the effects of that accident.

It was at this time that he took a step which has been greatly misconstrued. If for any reason he should resign, he felt that he must do something for a livelihood, as he would be without adequate means of support. There had appeared in the newspapers an advertisement informing the world that the position of commandant of cadets at the Virginia Military Institute was vacant; this was a school provided for by the State and ranking next to West Point in the excellence of its military instruction. Thomas wrote for information concerning it. This has been construed by his maligners as an evidence of his intention to desert the Union cause. Nothing could be more mistaken; he considered himself as an invalid; he still believed that secession, which had gone up like a rocket, would come down like a stick; that it would not be espoused by a majority of the Southern States, his own being among the number that would repudiate it, and that in his retirement he would be able to take care of his health and cultivate the art of war by studious perusal of the campaigns of great generals. It may be said that his wish was father to his thought; but there were many good men who had similar hopes.

He found himself measurably recovering from his wound and his accident. He saw that the animus of the South was from day to day more warlike.

Secession had made a clean sweep. Virginia, who had disapproved and discountenanced the secession of South Carolina, had now joined the Confederate ranks. His decision was made and it was final. The bombardment of Fort Sumter clinched it. He was thenceforth a Union man, ready and anxious to fight in the Union quarrel, to give all that he had, even his life, to the service of the nation. The day before Fort Sumter fell Thomas started from New York for Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where he was ordered to reorganize and equip his regiment, the second cavalry, for immediate service in the field. His leave of absence had not more than half expired, and it was the only leave he had had for twelve long years.

The great question of allegiance which Thomas had settled for himself had proved a stumbling-block to all the other field officers of his regiment. Colonel A. S. Johnston, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert E. Lee, and the senior major, W. J. Hardee, had resigned their commissions to enter the Confederate service, and by their resignation Major Thomas was placed in command of the regiment as colonel on May 3, 1861.\* His promotion was thus regular and rapid.

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\* It has been said that he then took the new and strengthened oath of allegiance twice on the same day. As it was required that an officer on being promoted to a higher grade should again take the oath, it may well be that the commissions of lieutenant colonel and colonel followed each other so rapidly that he took the oath twice in quick succession and possibly on the same day.

He was a full colonel at the age of forty-four, and so he was unexpectedly but richly rewarded for his adherence to the Union.

In November, 1860, General Twiggs, then in command of the Department of the South, had dismounted this regiment and ordered it out of Texas; it needed, therefore, a thorough reorganization—recruits, rearrangement of companies and assignment to them; the purchase of horses and preliminary drills, all of which taxed the activity and industry of Thomas to the utmost. It had been on April 10, 1861—two days before the bombardment of Fort Sumter—that all the companies of his regiment except two had been sent to Carlisle Barracks, and the remaining two to Army Headquarters at Washington. The rapidity with which he put his regiment into condition for service is indicated by his readiness to take immediate part in the campaign.

While at Carlisle he went out with four companies of his regiment to protect the Northern Central Railroad, which was threatened from Maryland. Every day the war clouds lowered more portentously. Thomas was ordered, with these four companies, to join General Patterson in the Valley of Virginia, where the *City Troop* of Philadelphia\* was added to

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\* The first City Troop of Philadelphia was an organization which had existed since the Revolution (and still exists). It acted as escort to General Washington from Philadelphia to Cambridge in 1775. Its history was published in 1875.

his force, and very soon he was placed in command of a brigade.

It is not within the scope of this work to review the brief campaign of Patterson except in so far as Thomas was concerned in it. It bore a relation to the general plan only vaguely discerned until after it was over.

Had the Federal troops been successful at Bull Run, it would hardly have elicited a passing comment; it would have only been considered a cover of Harper's Ferry barring the entrance into Pennsylvania. The defeat at Bull Run caused the authorities to look for reasons, and, in search for a scape goat, the blame fell upon Patterson. The story is well known. General McDowell, an untried leader and a favorite of General Scott, moved out from Washington with an undrilled and undisciplined force of thirty thousand men to meet Beauregard, who was marching northward from Richmond with an almost equal force, but of men more consolidated, and inspired by the hopes which had fired the Southern heart. They encountered each other at and around Bull Run. These were the chief combatants, and at one time during the action the Federal advance had placed the Confederates in great straits, and the Union victory seemed certain.

But besides these two armies, General Joseph E. Johnston, with Thomas J. Jackson under his command, was on the Northern line, where he was con-

fronted by General Patterson, as aforesaid, and in his emergency Beauregard awaited and hoped for this re-enforcement.

The orders to General Patterson, it must be said, were not very explicit. He was to drive Johnston back to Virginia, and also by his menacing attitude to hold him in his front, and thus prevent his re-enforcing Beauregard at the critical moment so as to give him additional advantage over McDowell's army. The Confederate hopes were realized. The Union army was overpowered and defeated.

Many penny-a-liners have tried their unskilled hands on this problem. To the military critic it appears that the issue of the campaign ought not to have been unexpected. The movement on Bull Run was premature. The Union army was in no part organized or drilled. There were no generals worthy of the name; most brigades and some divisions were commanded by colonels newly appointed and inexperienced; the men did not know their officers. If it be said that the Southern force was in the same plight, that they were fairly matched, that the Federal troops had a large advantage at first, it must be added that the first indication of real strategy and grand tactics came from the Confederate leaders. The final overwhelming blow was dealt by that very force of Johnston which it was vainly hoped that Patterson could hold in check.

Let us look for the moment at the means which

Patterson had of doing so. His army consisted principally in a small contingent of three months' volunteers, who were so entirely unused to military service as to be of very little use in the field; but more than that, their time had almost expired and the men were eager to go home. He followed Johnston, crossing the Potomac at Williamsport; had a slight skirmish with him on July 2d at Falling Waters, confronted him at Martinsburg, and finally drove him to Winchester. It is now manifest that the movements of Johnston were of a temporizing policy until he could fall back by a forced march and join Beauregard at Bull Run. Patterson could not hold him; he was between Beauregard and Patterson, and every advance of the latter drove him toward the former. Could he not have followed him and re-enforced McDowell? It may be said that, with a dashing leader and vigorous troops in splendid condition that was possible, with or without orders. But he had no orders. He had vainly solicited them from hour to hour. The auspicious moment past, Patterson fell back when Johnston disappeared from his front, and after the defeat of our army he was overwhelmed with bitter but ignorant criticism.

We need not reopen the subject further. Thus much it has been necessary to say, because Thomas, the highest officer in his command, took strong ground in his favor when the subject was undergoing a heated discussion. In a letter to General



Patterson, written before Atlanta on August 8, 1864, three years after the date of these occurrences, he says: "Judging of them (the volunteer troops) as of other volunteer troops, had I been their commander I should not have been willing to risk them in a heavy battle coming off within a few days of the expiration of their service. I have always believed, and have frequently so expressed myself, that your management of the three months' campaign was able and judicious, and was to the best interests of the service, considering the means at your disposal and the nature of the troops under your command." Some military writers may differ from General Thomas on this subject; few will deny that he was a competent critic and honest in his judgment. The opinion expressed in the letter just cited is that of a trained soldier, a hero in many actions, and who was already known as the Rock of Chickamauga.

NOTE.—I have received the following communication, bearing upon a matter contained in this chapter, from a lady closely connected with General Thomas. I prefer to give it as written, rather than simply to embody it in my narrative:

"General Thomas came out of Texas with a year's leave of absence, in November, 1860, to join Mrs. Thomas in New York, having obtained the leave some months and only waiting for some one to relieve him at his post, without any thought of political troubles in the country, and with no reference to the arrow wound, from which he speedily recovered and never felt any effects afterward. He met with a serious accident on his journey, not from a railroad disaster, as commonly asserted, but from a misstep in getting out of the car at night while the train was taking in water somewhere near Lynchburg. Deceived by the shadows of the moonlight, he stepped out on to what he sup-

posed was the road, but proved to be down a deep ravine, sustaining a fall of twenty feet or more. He continued his journey to Norfolk, where Mrs. Thomas joined him and remained there until he was able to go to his mother's home in Southampton County, Virginia, suffering severely. After a visit of several weeks he went with Mrs. Thomas to New York, stopping a few days at Washington *en route*. It was while in New York that he fully realized the extent of his injury, and, fearing he would never be able to do duty again with his regiment, he began to think what he could do in the event of being obliged to give up his military life. Mrs. Thomas saw in the columns of the National Intelligencer an advertisement for commandant of cadets at the Virginia Military Institute, read it aloud to him, and asked if he could do that duty. He said he thought he could, and accordingly wrote to the superintendent, Major F. H. Smith, asking about the vacancy, and received word in reply that the vacancy had been filled. There the matter rested, and from these facts the story has grown that General Thomas applied for an appointment in the Confederate army. He was in New York when his regiment arrived from Texas, and could easily have obtained a surgeon's certificate for inability to do any duty, but preferred to make the effort, suffering and disabled as he was. He obeyed the order immediately to join his regiment at Carlisle and refit it for service. It was while on the train for Carlisle that he first heard of the attack on Fort Sumter, and wrote to Mrs. Thomas on his arrival: 'Whichever way he turned the matter over in his mind, his oath of allegiance to his Government always came uppermost.'"

## CHAPTER III.

### APPOINTED A BRIGADIER GENERAL.

Kentucky and the Union—General Robert Anderson at Louisville—Sherman, Buell, Mitchel—Doubts concerning Thomas overcome—Appointed brigadier August 17, 1861—Assigned to the Department of the Cumberland—"The dark and bloody ground"—Preponderating sentiment for the Union—Governor Magoffin—Bell and Everett—Lincoln—Neutrality—Buckner and the "Home Guard"—Cumberland Gap—Thomas goes toward East Tennessee—Zollicoffer—Nelson's camp, "Dick Robinson"—Brownlow, Nelson, and Andrew Johnson—Want of troops and supplies—Forward and back—Attempt to supersede Thomas—Incessant labor.

A NEW promotion now awaited Colonel Thomas. With the rapid rush of affairs it was soon manifest that the border State of Kentucky would be the ground of fierce contention between the opposing forces. Should it be swept into the secession ranks, or should it remain with the Union? The most strenuous efforts were made on both sides. General Robert Anderson, who had become widely known by his defense of Fort Sumter, and who was a native of Kentucky, had been sent to take command of the Department of the Tennessee, and had made his headquarters at Louisville. He had accepted on

condition that he might name his subordinate brigadiers. With regard to three of them he had no trouble—viz., William T. Sherman, Buell, and O. M. Mitchel. He was in doubt as to the fourth, and was just about to nominate Simon B. Buckner, who soon after went into the Confederate ranks, when his attention was called to Colonel Thomas, whom he had known in the service before. He nominated Thomas to the President, and this nomination was fortified by the recommendation of the Hon. Samuel J. Randall, who had served under him in the first City Troop of Philadelphia during the campaign of General Patterson.

The Government still looked askance upon an officer of Virginia birth, and who also belonged to the Second Cavalry, the ranks of which had been greatly depleted by the wholesale resignation of Southern officers with whom it had been largely filled by Jefferson Davis.

General Sherman, in his Memoirs, declares as much when he says that General Anderson, who had gone to Washington to present his views and receive instructions, and had asked for the appointment of certain officers to serve under him as brigadiers, had some difficulty in prevailing on Mr. Lincoln to appoint George H. Thomas, a native of Virginia, to be brigadier general, because so many Southern officers had already left the army to join the Confederate service.

Thomas was doubly unfortunate because, besides being suspected by the Federal Government, he was regarded by many at the South as a traitor whose sin was unpardonable. The scruples of the President were, however, overcome. His appointment as brigadier general dates from August 17, 1861, and he was assigned to the Department of the Cumberland on the 24th of the same month. Beyond the recognition of his merits by his comrades in the army, he was as yet an unknown man, and the first steps of the career now opening to him were full of doubt and danger, which would tax not only his military judgment but also his moral courage to the utmost. The region in which he was called to serve and try his "prentice hand" was the debatable land between the North and South—a veritable "Chevy Chase."

In order to form a just estimate of what was being done and what was to be done in Kentucky, it becomes necessary to take a look backward upon the political condition of affairs in that State. Peopled mainly by emigrants from Virginia and the Carolinas, it was considered by the casual observer to be as Southern in its character as any of the States about to secede and enter the Southern Confederacy; and yet, to the astonishment of the Southern people themselves, it became evident, as political matters were converging to a crisis in 1861, that Kentucky would be loyal to the Union. "It is unquestionably though painfully true," says Edward A. Pollard, "that the

great body of the people of Kentucky were the active allies of Lincoln."

Kentucky had been known in its earlier history as the "dark and bloody ground" of fierce Indian tribes; it continued to deserve the name during the Revolution, when Great Britain formed alliances with the Indians. The treaty of peace and Jay's later treaty did not entirely stop the fighting there. It came into the Union as a State in 1792, and ranked with the South in character. But the preponderance of loyal men in Kentucky required gradual demonstration; indeed, it took some time for men to know their own minds.

In 1859 it seemed that the State was so strongly proslavery in the approaching controversy that Governor Magoffin was elected on that issue, and it might be well feared that it would join the Southern States in the coming contest.

In 1860, however, this fear was dispelled by the nomination of a Presidential ticket with the names of Bell and Everett, which certainly looked toward gradual emancipation, which then seemed possible. That ticket was elected in Kentucky, and this greatly strengthened the hands of Union men. They began at once to fight the secession movement at every point, and to dwell upon the vast commercial advantages which Kentucky would enjoy within the Union. Just after the election of Lincoln the State Legislature met, and while they defended slavery as

an existing institution, they were strong for the Union, denounced secession, and deprecated war. Then began a game of wits. A State guard was organized which was intended to be neutral; but when Buckner took command of it and posted it at Bowling Green, it was soon declared to be in the secession interests. Governor Magoffin had refused to enlist the troops called for by Lincoln's proclamation; but when, on July 4, 1861, the President called an extra session of Congress, the members sent from Kentucky were all Union men. This was the signal for political disintegration; the secessionists of Kentucky scattered to the South and took up arms with the South; the State was strong for the Union. The controversy became and remained indeed a purely political one, but the soil of Kentucky was the scene of varied strategy and bloody battles to the end of the war.

Buckner, with the Home Guard, had joined the Confederate ranks and taken post at Bowling Green, Kentucky, on the Big Barren Branch of the Green River, a tributary of the Ohio, to await the progress of events and soon to join fiercely in the strife. Thus the State was in a condition of the greatest turmoil; loyal Kentuckians were in danger of being overpowered and silenced by secession forces. Honest but ignorant men were told that their slaves would be at once taken from them, although the President had declared that he had no such purpose. Such men

armed to defend their property. In this condition of things it seemed good policy to send to Kentucky officers of Southern birth who had remained loyal to the Union and who could yet understand the difficulties of their Southern brethren. Among these were Thomas J. Wood, Rousseau, Ward, R. W. Johnson, and Boyle.

Such was certainly the reason also of sending Thomas to Kentucky, and great hopes were entertained of the Union movements there. With the exception of the early and tentative affairs in Western Virginia under McClellan and Rosecrans, there had as yet been no Federal victory. The battle of Bull Run, fought in July, 1861, was a great defeat for the Union arms. The whole loyal North was on the tiptoe of expectation and impatient hope for some cheering event to wipe out that disgrace. New generals were being appointed. Troops were in motion and being encamped upon objective points of the irregular chess board. A gleam of victory would be hailed with the greatest enthusiasm, and the general who should achieve it would be regarded, among the host of untried commanders, as the "coming man" who was so greatly needed. Such were some of the strong incentives among the data of the problem presented to Thomas in Kentucky. Just at this juncture General Anderson's health failed, and he asked to be relieved of his command, in which he was succeeded by General William T. Sherman early in September, 1861.



We may now stop for a moment to consider the strategy of the proposed campaign. An examination of the ground will display its main features at a glance. Thomas had studied the situation, both offensive and defensive. His purpose was to go at once into East Tennessee, in which there were many loyal Union men cruelly oppressed by the Confederate forces raised in that region and by public Southern opinion. These he would rescue and relieve from their sufferings, and thus at the same time recruit the Union ranks. He would also seize the railroad, the main artery of the Confederacy, running from Richmond into Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Thus he would cut their communications with the North, and provide a good starting point for the Southern movements. Chattanooga would fall into Union hands.

Many of these loyal East Tennesseans who had fled into Kentucky were clamorous for an immediate movement of Union troops to relieve their oppressed brethren. Thomas reported to Sherman at Louisville on September 6, 1861, and saw at once the difficult nature of the problem as I have endeavored to show it; it was not only a military but a political situation. There were many impatient people making a din about his ears from the very start. The authorities at Washington were urging the movement upon Sherman, and Sherman was astounding them with the magnitude of his demands for the

success of such a movement. The army was expecting it, and the loyal East Tennesseans, backed rather impatiently by ex-Governor Andrew Johnson and others, were clamorous to be taken back home protected by Union troops. But where were the troops with which to accomplish this? They were not yet collected, and when collected they could hardly be called troops.

Lieutenant William Nelson, of the navy, a loyal Kentuckian, who happened to be at home on furlough, was given, without its interfering with his naval rank, an appointment as brigadier general of volunteers. He was a man cast in a gigantic mould, of stern character, dogmatic will, great energy, and strong prejudice. He was selected to form the nucleus of an army for this campaign. With this purpose he established his headquarters in middle Kentucky very near the Kentucky River, about fifty miles south of Frankfort, which he named "Camp Dick Robinson."

There were congregated the most motley crowd that ever bore the name of soldiers. There were loyal men of Kentucky and Tennessee, especially East Tennessee, called "Andrew Johnson's men"; adventurers from Ohio to whom such an opportunity was a Godsend; but the prevailing spirit was that of loyalty to the Union. They were not deceived by the proffer that if they would disband so would Buckner—every day showed the absolute impracti-

cability of such a course; nor by the specious proclamation of Zollicoffer, that he was coming "to defend the soil of a sister Southern State against an invading foe, and that no citizen of Kentucky was to be molested in person or property, whatever his political opinions, unless found in arms against the Confederate Government, or giving aid and comfort to the enemy by his counsels."

The moving spirits on the Union side in East Tennessee besides Andrew Johnson, later to be President of the United States, were "Parson Brownlow," who stirred the people by his rugged harangues, and T. A. R. Nelson, a patriot of a poetic temperament and golden-mouthed oratory. "It is not difficult," says General Howard, "to imagine all the chaos of this big camp. The ever-changing commanders of the department or district, and the ambition of great men, who, as yet unused to war, had come hither to assert their prerogatives, were among the prime causes. Above and below Thomas there was commotion and perpetual unrest. Steady, strong, firm, deliberate, he brought order out of confusion."

Recruits were taken thither without equipment and without proper supplies of any sort; every day accessions were made of men, but not of supplies; and yet out of these chaotic elements it was hoped that a skillful commander could at once create an army. Thomas was the devoted man to whom this duty was intrusted. He was assigned to the com-

mand of "Camp Dick Robinson" on September 12th. The disloyal Kentuckians laid plans to capture him on his journey thither, but he avoided their snares and arrived safely on the 15th, where he found about six thousand men, and where his eyes were at once opened to the difficulty of the situation. The prospect was indeed a gloomy one. There was great want of arms, ammunition, food, clothing, and shelter. His first act was to appoint a quartermaster and a commissary of subsistence. The men were soon comfortably sheltered and fed. Then he wrote with great insistency for a full supply of rations, cartridges, and muskets. Men, he said, were of no use without these; and yet men were coming in numbers. The very fact of his taking command caused many loyal men to flock to the standard, while disloyalty found its place in the rapidly increasing armies of the Confederacy or in the form of the guerrilla warfare.

He set himself busily to work to give form and consistence to this heterogeneous mass. It was soon organized into six regiments; others were added later. Other regiments in better condition were also forwarded to him; these were all arranged in four brigades, constituting the *First Division* of "the Army of the Cumberland," with a proportional force of unattached cavalry and artillery.\*

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\* "Such was the promising nucleus of that great army which later on swept through Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, the two

The department was now commanded by General Sherman, and the troops thus far organized had been designated the Army of the Cumberland on account of the great strategic value of that river. Thomas was obliged also to create a staff out of his undisciplined material. By constant drills and a rigorous system of camp police he had effected a great transformation, and his troops were every day becoming more and more fitted, as they were more and more anxious, to be led against the enemy. After this preparation they now only waited for orders, and these were earnestly solicited.

In what direction should he move? His first suggestion was to advance rapidly through Cumberland Gap upon Knoxville, an important strategic point as we have seen, and after destroying the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad he would follow the enemy in the mountains and capture or disperse his army. But the enemy had not been idle either. A force under General Zollicoffer, acting, it is said, without orders, had made a rapid advance upon Loudon through the Cumberland Gap, that narrow and vital mountain pass, very near the point where the States of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee meet. It was a fair trial of conclusions between the two forces, Thomas intending to pass through Cumberland Gap

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Carolinas, and Virginia, and was finally reviewed at Washington, before it melted away into the peaceable elements from which it had thus early been organized."



into East Tennessee, while Zollicoffer really passed through it into Kentucky. According to the Confederate account, Zollicoffer had already, on September 29th, dispersed a small Union camp at Barboursville on the Cumberland, about seventy miles north of Knoxville. Then General Schoepf, who had been sent out by General Thomas to contest his advance, in the fear of being flanked by the enemy from Bowling Green, had rapidly retired. Thus the plans of the Union general were changed; he pushed forward a large party to obstruct the roads by which the enemy would advance, and at the same time called urgently for re-enforcements. His action seemed to throw Zollicoffer into a state of indecision; instead of marching in advance from Loudon to Rock Castle Hills, he fell back to Cumberland ford.

While Thomas was exhibiting incessant activity in bringing order out of this chaos and catching glimpses of success at the end, he was almost stunned by a letter received from General O. M. Mitchel at Cincinnati, who had, like himself, been recently appointed a brigadier general and was only a few days his senior, inclosing an order from the Secretary of War directing him to take command of the department, and to supersede Thomas in the conduct of the campaign upon which he had just entered. Thomas might well object, for thus he would be robbed of the glory which should follow

from its success. He was not the man to permit this. The Government might supersede him, it was true, but he would not fight under Mitchel in that campaign. He wrote to him courteously but firmly, expressing his dissatisfaction, and declaring that he would refuse to serve under him. Should the order be enforced he would retire.

In the chaotic condition of affairs in that region it may well be doubted whether the publication of this order was dictated by any suspicion as to the loyalty and ability of Thomas. In its state of doubt and uncertainty the Government was glad to listen to any suggestions which might lead to success, and thus it was that Mitchel was advanced, with little consideration of the man whom he should supersede. But yet it is probable that he thought it implied suspicion, and he felt that he must vindicate both his patriotism and his powers. He also wrote to Sherman, who was still in command in that region of the forces now called the Army of the Cumberland. The prompt reply was very gratifying. "You are authorized," Sherman said, "to go on and prepare your command for active service. General Mitchel is subject to my orders, and I will, if possible, give you the opportunity to complete what you have begun." Thus his first great peril was overcome. The unbiassed reader will at once concede that Thomas was right. To be superseded was tantamount, in his judgment, to a charge against him that

he had not shown himself the man for the occasion. That demanded a reason, and a strong one. Did it imply incapacity or disloyalty? He had a right to know; indeed, he felt that, instead of being neglected or set aside, he deserved special consideration. However, the order was suspended, and Thomas pushed preparations forward as rapidly as possible.

The larger strategy of the enemy was now manifest. His long and weak line, greatly exaggerated in numbers, in order to deceive the Union generals, extended from Fort Henry through Bowling Green and up the Cumberland as far as Cumberland Gap. Thomas, who was now in firm command of the First Division, consisting of four brigades, was operating against its right, but with obstacles not only in his front but in his rear and in his midst. The troops were still undrilled and undisciplined, they were ill-armed and ill-clad, but as an offset to these evils they were very earnest and ardent, and anxious to be led against the enemy.



## CHAPTER IV.

### MILL SPRINGS.

Opposing counsels—*Festina lente*—Clamor from Washington—Schoepf toward Somerset—At Crab Orchard—Army of the Cumberland becomes Army of the Ohio—Sherman relieved by Buell—Schoepf left at Somerset—Back to Columbia—Zollicoffer and Crittenden advance—Mill Springs—Logan's Cross Roads—Fierce attack—Repulse—Rapid retreat—Recross the Cumberland—Pursuit soon abandoned—Great joy in the land—Thomas not mentioned in General Order—Results of victory.

WHILE Andrew Johnson had been, indecorously and without a show of authority, urging Thomas to move into East Tennessee, Sherman had warned him not to push too far and endanger his line of communications. The Government at Washington became also clamorous for a movement and a battle. He kept his own counsel, got such supplies and re-enforcements as he could, and watched the apparently irresolute enemy. The result was cheering. Indeed, it was a military dance of forward and back. General Garrard with the Third Kentucky Regiment was at Rock Castle Hills, and as the enemy advanced Thomas sent a part of the First Brigade under its chief, General Schoepf, consisting of the Four-

teenth Ohio, Fourth Kentucky, and two batteries, to reconnoitre as far as Somerset. The latter had not moved far, however, before he came upon the pickets of Zollicoffer, who had come from Cumberland Gap through Monticello, and who after a smart skirmish fell back. A week after, Thomas moved his headquarters forward to Crab Orchard with full intent to beat up the enemy's quarters wherever he should be; but an order from Sherman again checked him, and required him to withdraw his command across the Kentucky River. The scouting was not well done and the air was full of rumors.

The Confederate General A. S. Johnston had occupied Bowling Green, and was said to have a command of forty-five thousand men. It was afterward found that this had been magnified nearly threefold. It was asserted that he was about to cut the Union line between Thomas at Crab Orchard and McCook at Nolensville. Thus drawn back and held in leash, Thomas was obliged to abandon his scheme temporarily; and he was not even permitted to re-enforce Schoepf at Somerset. All this was due to an important change which was about to be made. By an order bearing date of November 15th, the coming event having cast its shadow before, the Army of the Cumberland became the Army of the Ohio, General W. T. Sherman was relieved from the command, and was succeeded by General Don Carlos Buell. The former had been considered visionary

even to the verge of insanity on account of his estimate given to the Secretary of War of the number of troops necessary for the successful conduct of the campaign in that region. When men of good common sense were declaring that, with seventy-five thousand three months' men for an entire army, sixty days would end the war, Sherman's estimate that two hundred thousand would be necessary in Kentucky and Tennessee alone seemed like the dream of a madman. His reputed ravings proved afterward to be the utterance of sober truth, and the splendid method in his madness throughout the war was a strong factor in achieving the final Union success. General Buell was a noble soldier—one of the very best of his time. He was stern, determined, and dignified, somewhat cautious, but an excellent administrator. He too was later to suffer from the unmilitary impatience of his superiors. Both these generals knew Thomas well; Sherman was his classmate at West Point, and Buell, in the class after him, was three years his companion there. Caution, however, was the order of the day at those headquarters. Schoepf was left at Somerset, while Thomas, in order to shorten the Union line, was ordered to fall back upon Lebanon and Danville. The enemy bombarded Schoepf, and he was then re-enforced.

It was considered that Thomas could march more safely southward by way of Columbia, to make connection with Schoepf, and that thus united

they could march upon the new camp of the enemy at Beech Grove. Crittenden had proceeded first to Mill Springs on the south bank of the Cumberland, and then, having surprised or outwitted the Union Ferry Guards, had encamped at Beech Grove on the north bank.

The line of Thomas, who on the 29th was placed in command of all the troops east of New Haven, was thus posted: The First and Second Tennessee and the Seventh Kentucky were at Loudon; the Fourteenth Ohio, Tenth Indiana, and Fourth and Tenth Kentucky, with a battery, were at Lebanon; the Third Kentucky and First Kentucky Cavalry were at Columbia; the Thirty-third Indiana was at Crab Orchard; the Thirty-first Ohio, the Thirty-first Ohio Battery, and a contingent of Cavalry were at Camp "Dick Robinson"; the Seventeenth and Thirty-third Ohio, with a battery, were near Somerset. This line did not long remain; the forces were moved by every whim or fancy from headquarters.

We may pause for a moment to take a glance at the force which Thomas was now about to encounter. It numbered between ten thousand and fifteen thousand men. The advance, consisting of two thousand men, was commanded by General Zollicoffer, a native Tennessean, a man of great worth, an editor, and a member of Congress, who in 1861 had become a brigadier general in the Confederate

service. He had led the advance, but this and the whole remaining force were under the command of General George B. Crittenden, a graduate of West Point and a soldier of experience, who had served in the Black Hawk War, the Texan Revolution of 1835, and the Mexican War. His encampment at Beech Grove betokened his purpose to fight, and now instructions had been given to Thomas to meet him. It was claimed afterward, in extenuation of his defeats, that Crittenden had no alternative but to fight. He was almost without supplies, and the country could not provide them. General Crittenden joined the advance and assumed the command on January 1, 1862.

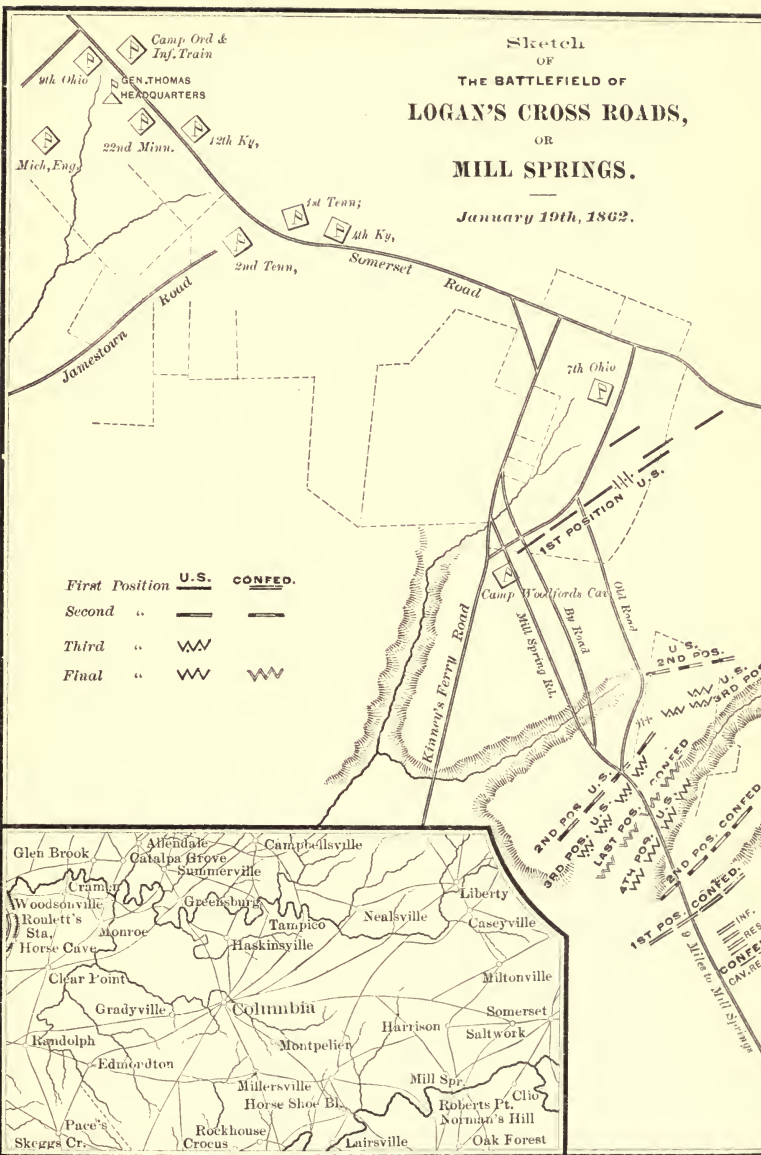
On December 29th Buell ordered Thomas to march southward and to join Schoepf. This was the permission so long waited for. He started on the 31st from Lebanon through Columbia; but so serious were the troubles and the obstacles that confronted him that it took him eighteen days to march to Logan's Cross Roads, so near Mill Springs, on the southern bank of the Cumberland, that it is the alternative name of the battle field. It was an uncommonly rainy season. The roads were very difficult for the transportation of supplies and ammunition and for the movement of artillery.

Again, as his progress was retarded, new clamors arose at his delay. At Logan's Cross Roads, when he reached it, he communicated with Schoepf, who

sent him re-enforcements; and he was obliged to pause until he could in a manner reorganize and prepare for the work before him. Thus, moving himself with a small division from Columbia, he was to join Schoepf, who was marching with his brigade from Somerset, thirty miles south. They were to join forces before the enemy could attack either in detail. Crittenden's force had crossed the Cumberland at a point between the two and ten miles south of Thomas. It must be observed that at the last moment this union of the forces of Thomas and Schoepf was a delicate matter in front of the enemy. It was a question of exactitude in point of time. The place where Schoepf was to join him was at or near Beach Grove, and thus he would defeat the purpose of the enemy to strike the Union army in detail.

The description of the field of battle may be epitomized. Thomas lay along the Somerset road and across the Mill Springs road. His purpose of advance and attack was fortunately forestalled by Crittenden, who left his camp at Beach Grove on the Cumberland and marched at a quick step the ten miles to Logan's Cross Roads on the evening of January 18th. Early the next morning, hoping to overpower Thomas before he had concentrated his troops and disposed them for battle, Crittenden, driving in Woolford's cavalry, attacked vigorously and was promptly repulsed. Zollicoffer had moved at midnight, and at the dawn of Sunday—a dark and

Sketch  
OF  
THE BATTLEFIELD OF  
**LOGAN'S CROSS ROADS,**  
OR  
**MILL SPRINGS.**  
January 19th, 1862.







rainy Sunday—the attack was made. The enemy advanced to the crest of the last intervening hill. There halting, he sent for re-enforcements. Crittenden's advance was disclosed by Woolford's cavalry.

The attack was expected and received by Colonel Manson's Second Brigade, supported by Colonel S. S. Fry, of the Fourth Kentucky. These troops held the enemy in check. With all speed General Thomas ordered forward the Tenth Indiana. Thus met in front, the enemy, advancing through a cornfield, endeavored to flank the left of Colonel Fry's regiment; but the prompt advance of the Tennessee Brigade against the enemy's right, and the rapid firing of a section of Captain Kinney's battery, posted to the left of that regiment, put a stop to his advance. The Fourth Kentucky and the Tenth Indiana, being now out of ammunition, were replaced by the Second Minnesota and the Ninth Ohio, who charged the enemy on his left with fixed bayonets. But there was no longer need of force. Crittenden had had enough of the fight; he fell back in haste. The Union line was reformed, an advance, conducted with due caution, forced the enemy still farther back to his distant intrenchments, and on reaching them Thomas ordered a vigorous cannonade upon them. It is said that in the confusion Zollicoffer mistook Fry's command for some of his own troops, and, advancing to join them, was killed by a pistol shot fired by Fry himself. At the same time Fry's horse was shot. Thomas had

followed the enemy closely, and on the afternoon of the 19th he reformed his line of battle very near to their intrenchments and opened upon them with his artillery. But the battle of Mill Springs had been already won.

Through the night Thomas made all his arrangements in preparation for an attack at dawn, not doubting that he would meet with a stern resistance. We may judge of his astonishment when he found at the earliest streaks of day that Crittenden had left his intrenchments with such precipitancy that he had abandoned everything behind them—one hundred and sixty wagons filled with supplies, and all his artillery and ammunition trains. It was very difficult to understand this lame and impotent conclusion of his boastful advance. The disorder in his ranks, however, whatever the reason, merged into panic. He made haste to cross the Cumberland and place it as a barrier between himself and his triumphant foe. This was done by a steamer and three ferryboats, which were then burned to obstruct the pursuit. Thomas, crossing a portion of his force in skiffs, pursued him as far as Monticello, where the enemy had arrived in a starving condition, and then slowly returned to Somerset. The Union losses had not been great; they were but one officer and thirty-eight men killed, fourteen officers and one hundred and ninety-four men wounded. Those of the enemy were greater—viz., one hundred and twenty killed,

three hundred and forty-nine wounded and prisoners. Computing the numbers actually engaged, there was a great disparity between the forces. The army of Crittenden numbered in action twelve thousand men, while that of Thomas consisted of eight regiments, or scant seven thousand men.

The battle is known by three titles—Logan's Cross Roads, Fishing Creek, and Mill Springs; the last named is the most commonly used. It was hailed with shouts of joy throughout the country. Buell's order of the day—January 23, 1862—conveys the thanks of the commander in chief to Thomas and his army for what he calls their brilliant victory. It is certainly unaccountable, except on the conviction that the Government did not look with great confidence upon Thomas, that the Secretary of War makes no mention of him by name or title in the order from Washington concerning the victory. He is lavish of praise for the prompt and spirited movements and daring battle of Mill Springs on the part of the United States forces, but he does not mention Thomas either by name or implication. The omission is marked, and Thomas felt it. Nor was he promoted for this victory. Others who had done nothing as yet were being promoted, but it was required of him to do something more before he should be. The Legislature of Ohio, then in session, was more generous. The battle, as we have seen, was fought on January 19th. Under date of January 28th a resolu-

tion was passed thanking Thomas and his men in good set terms for their important victory.

If the battle of Mill Springs was barren of immediate results it was not the fault of Thomas. As at the present time we look back upon it, we wonder that he was not permitted to carry out the plans for the conquest and occupancy of East Tennessee which he alone had clearly excogitated and had thus actually begun; but at least the rebel line was broken and must be readjusted. The victories of Grant at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, and the concentration of troops on the Tennessee to meet the enemy at Pittsburg Landing, diverted the attention of the authorities from Thomas's scheme, and even for a time obscured its importance.

We may pause for a moment, however, to see what had been really demonstrated by this battle of Mill Springs to the anxious and expectant country:

I. It was the first victory achieved by the Union arms. Everything before had been tentative; the country was waiting to see whether its armies were to manœuvre, advance, and fall back, according to the precepts of the "circumlocution office," or whether the generals meant business and fight. Here, then, was a downright honest blow, a knock-down blow which struck the keynote of actual fighting and success; a victory so complete and disastrous to the enemy that the moral results were large—entirely out of proportion to the material gains.

II. It was not merely a piece of battle tactics which routed the enemy for the moment ; it was a fine exhibition of strategy, which destroyed the right of an extremely long strategic line, which made it possible to invade East Tennessee, destroy the trunk line of railroad, occupy Chattanooga, and greatly shorten the war. All that was in the purpose of General Thomas, but circumstances had conspired against him.

III. It created a general and presented a type and an example for others to imitate. Up to this time we had no generals ; the Government was making experiments. Many men who had never commanded a brigade, and many others who had never commanded anything, but were clever politicians, were sent into the field to demonstrate their incapacity. The failures were more numerous than Beau Brummell's cravats ; but here, on the contrary, was disclosed to the view of the country a real general, who had commanded and held well in hand ten thousand men, and with a portion of them had defeated in fair battle a force of the enemy nearly double his own. Thomas was literally the first general in point of time developed by the war, and equal, as will be seen in the course of the war, to any which it developed. The battle of Mill Springs established his reputation as a soldier and an accomplished general.

IV. It defeated the schemes of the secessionists and secured Kentucky to the Union. It made a

grand gathering center for Union men and diffused a Union spirit. It constituted the State a strong base of supplies, containing many points of departure for the Union army moving southward. To the loyal men of Kentucky and Tennessee it was great happiness to see such a feat accomplished in their own territory by a Virginian who was likewise an American patriot.

Thus it is that, while in point of numbers of killed and wounded the battle of Mill Springs does not figure among the great actions of the war, it must be conceded that when we consider its early delivery, its inauguration of successful fighting in the Southern campaign, the difficult and hazardous character of this bold, initial experiment, it rises to an importance disproportioned to the numbers engaged. It proved Thomas to be independent, earnest, determined, and valiant, with a sense of superiority to his adversary, with a prestige which accompanied him through his entire career. It showed him to be a man whose self-respect was great, who would not be overslaughed or set aside with impunity, and it swept away among all right-minded men the false suspicions which had been entertained as to his loyalty to the Government.

It should also be observed that, had Thomas been permitted to carry out his plans and been rapidly re-enforced, he might have moved at once; he might have taken Knoxville and Chattanooga almost by a *coup-de-main* and greatly hastened the end of the

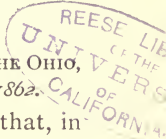
war. It was perhaps too much, however, to expect at that time, and the Union troops were neither numerous nor veteran enough for such a campaign, however excellent their general might be.

*Extract from General Thomas's Report of the Battle  
of Mill Springs.*

"HEADQUARTERS FIRST DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF THE OHIO,  
"SOMERSET, KY., *January 31, 1862.*

"CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that, in carrying out the instructions of the general commanding the department, contained in his communication of December 29th, I reached Logan's Cross Roads, about ten miles north of the intrenched camp of the enemy on the Cumberland River, on the 17th instant, with a portion of the Second and Third Brigades, Kinney's battery of artillery, and a battalion of Woolford's cavalry. The Fourth and Tenth Kentucky, Fourteenth Ohio, and Eighteenth United States Infantry being still in rear, detained by the almost impassable condition of the roads, I determined to halt at this point, await their arrival, and to communicate with General Schoepf.

"The Tenth Indiana, Woolford's cavalry, and Kinney's battery took position on the main road leading to the enemy's camp. The Ninth Ohio and Second Minnesota (part of Colonel McCook's brigade) encamped three fourths of a mile to the right on the Roberts post-road. Strong pickets were thrown out in the direction of the enemy beyond where the Somerset and Mill Springs road comes into the main road from my camp to Mill Springs, and a picket of cavalry some distance in ad-



vance of the infantry. General Schoepf visited me on the day of my arrival, and, after consultation, I directed him to send to my camp Standart's battery, the Twelfth Kentucky, and the First and Second Tennessee Regiments, to remain until the arrival of the regiments in the rear.

"Having received information, on the evening of the 17th, that a large train of wagons with its escort was encamped on the Robertsport and Danville road, about six miles from Colonel Steedman's camp, I sent an order to him to send his wagons forward under a strong guard, and to march with his regiment (the Fourteenth Ohio) and the Tenth Kentucky, Colonel Harlan, with one day's rations in their haversacks, to the point where the enemy were said to be encamped, and either capture or disperse them.

"Nothing of importance occurred from the time of our arrival until the morning of the 19th except a picket skirmish on the night of the 17th. The Fourth, the battalion Michigan Engineers, and Wetmore's battery joined on the 18th. About half past six o'clock on the morning of the 19th the pickets from Woolford's cavalry encountered the enemy advancing on our camp, retired slowly, and reported their advance to Colonel M. D. Manson, commanding the Second Brigade. He immediately formed his regiment (the Tenth Indiana) and took a position on the road to await the attack, ordering the Fourth Kentucky, Colonel S. S. Fry, to support him, and then informed me in person that the enemy were advancing in force and what disposition he had made to resist them. I directed him to join his brigade immediately, and hold the enemy in check



until I could order up the other troops, which were ordered to form immediately, and were marching to the field in ten minutes afterward. The battalion of Michigan Engineers, and Company A, Thirty-eighth Ohio, were ordered to remain as guard to the camp. Upon my arrival on the field soon afterward I found the Tenth Indiana formed in front of their encampment apparently awaiting orders, and ordered them forward to the support of the Fourth Kentucky, which was the only entire regiment then engaged. I then rode forward myself to see the enemy's position, so that I could determine what disposition to make of my troops as they arrived. On reaching the position held by the Fourth Kentucky, Tenth Indiana, and Woolford's cavalry, at a point where the roads fork to go to Somerset, I found the enemy advancing through a cornfield and evidently endeavoring to gain the left of the Fourth Kentucky Regiment, which was maintaining its position in a most determined manner. I directed one of my aids to ride back and order up a section of artillery and the Tennessee Brigade to advance on the enemy's right, and sent orders to Colonel McCook to advance with his two regiments (the Ninth Ohio and Second Minnesota) to the support of the Fourth Kentucky and Eighteenth Indiana.

"A section of Captain Kinney's battery took a position on the edge of the field, to the left of the Fourth Kentucky, and opened an effective fire on a regiment of Alabamians which was advancing on the Fourth Kentucky. Soon afterward the Second Minnesota, Colonel H. P. Van Cleve, arrived, reporting to me for instructions. I directed him to take the position of the Fourth Kentucky and Tenth In-

diana, which regiments were nearly out of ammunition. The Ninth Ohio, under the immediate command of Major Kaimmerling, came into position on the right of the road at the same time. Immediately after these regiments had gained their positions the enemy opened a most determined and galling fire, which was returned by our troops in the same spirit, and for nearly half an hour the contest was maintained on both sides in the most obstinate manner.

“At this time the Twelfth Kentucky, Colonel W. A. Hoskins, and the Tennessee Brigade, reached the field on the left of the Minnesota regiment, and opened fire on the right flank of the enemy, who then began to fall back.

“The Second Minnesota kept up a most galling fire in front, and the Ninth Ohio charged the enemy on the left with bayonets fixed, turned their flank, and drove them from the field, the whole line giving way and retreating in the utmost disorder and confusion.

“As soon as the regiments could be formed and refill their cartridge boxes I ordered the whole force to advance. A few miles in rear of the battlefield a small force of cavalry was drawn up near the road, but a few shots from our artillery—a section of Standart’s battery—dispersed it, and none of the enemy were seen again until we arrived in front of their intrenchment.

“As we approached their intrenchments the division was deployed in line of battle, and steadily advanced along the summit of the hill of Mouldens. From this point I directed their intrenchments to be cannonaded, which was done until dark by Standart and Wetmore’s batteries. Kinney’s battery was

placed in position on the extreme left of Russell's house, from which point he was directed to fire on their ferry to deter them from attempting to cross.

"On the following morning Captain Wetmore's battery was ordered to Russell's house, and assisted with his Parrott guns in firing upon the ferry. Colonel Manson's brigade took position on the left, near Kinney's battery, and every preparation was made to assault their intrenchments on the following morning. The Fourteenth Ohio, Colonel Steedman, and the Tenth Kentucky, Colonel Harlan, having joined from detached service soon after the repulse of the enemy, continued with their brigade in pursuit, although they could not get up in time to join in the fight. These two regiments were placed in front, in my advance on the intrenchments the next morning, and entered first, General Schoepf having also joined me the evening of the 19th with the Seventeenth, Thirty-first, Thirty-fifth, and Thirty-eighth Ohio, his entire brigade, and entered with the other troops. On reaching the intrenchments we found that the enemy had abandoned everything and retired during the night. Twelve pieces of artillery, with their caissons packed with ammunition; one battery wagon and two forges; a large amount of small arms, mostly the old flint-lock muskets, and ammunition for the same; one hundred and fifty or sixty wagons and upward of one thousand horses and mules; a large amount of commissary stores, intrenching tools, and camp and garrison equipage, fell into our hands. A correct list of all the captured property will be forwarded as soon as it can be made up and the property secured.

“The steam and ferry boats having been burned by the enemy on their retreat, it was found impossible to cross the river and pursue them; besides, their command was completely demoralized, and retreated with great haste and in all directions, making their capture in any numbers quite doubtful if pursued. There is no doubt but that the moral effect produced by their complete dispersion will have a more decided effect in re-establishing Union sentiments than though they had been captured.”

In order to present a picture which is at once a companion and a counterpart and which magnifies the feat of arms of Thomas by exhibiting the utter discomfiture of his enemy, we give the following :

*Extracts from General G. B. Crittenden's report of the  
Battle of Mill Springs.*

“The enemy sought evidently to combine their forces stationed at Somerset and Columbia, and when such junction was made to invest my intrenchments. I deemed it proper, therefore, to make an attack before the junction could be effected, feeling confident, from the reports of the cavalry pickets made at a late hour, that the waters of Fishing Creek were so high as to prevent them from uniting. My information in that respect was correct.

“Soon after daylight on the morning of January 19th the cavalry advance came in contact with the pickets of the enemy after a march of nearly nine miles over a deep and muddy road. With a few shots the enemy's pickets were driven in, retiring about a quarter of a mile to a house on the left of the road.

From this house and woods in the rear of it quite a brisk fire was opened upon the head of the column. Skirmishers having been thrown forward, General Zollicoffer's brigade was formed in line of battle and ordered to advance upon the enemy, whom I supposed would come out from their camp, which we were now approaching to take position. The road here extended straight in front for near a mile toward the north.

"A company of skirmishers from the Mississippi regiment advancing on the left of the road, after sharp firing, drove a body of the enemy from the house and the woods next to it, and then, under orders, crossing the road, fell in with their regiment. Following this company of skirmishers on the left of the road to the point where it crossed to the right, the regiment of Colonel Cummings (Nineteenth Tennessee) kept straight on, and crossing a field about two hundred and fifty yards wide at double-quick, charged into the woods where the enemy was sheltered, driving back the Tenth Indiana Regiment until it was re-enforced.

"At this time General Zollicoffer rode up to the Nineteenth Tennessee and ordered Colonel Cummings to cease firing, under the impression that the firing was upon another regiment of his own brigade. Then the general advanced, as if to give an order to the lines of the enemy, within bayonet reach, and was killed just as he discovered his fatal mistake. Thereupon a conflict ensued, when the Nineteenth Tennessee broke its line and gave back. Rather in the rear and near to this regiment was the Twenty-fifth Tennessee, commanded by Colonel Stanton, which engaged the enemy, when the colonel was

wounded at the head of his men ; but this regiment, impressed with the same idea which had proved fatal to General Zollicoffer—that it was engaged with friends—soon broke its line and fell into some disorder.

“At this time—the fall of General Zollicoffer having been announced to me—I went forward in the road to the regiments of Colonels Cummings and Stanton, and announced to Colonel Cummings the death of General Zollicoffer, and that the command of the brigade devolved upon him.

“There was a cessation of firing for a few moments, and I ascertained that the regiment of Colonel Battle was on the right and the Mississippi regiment in the center, neither as yet having been actively engaged, and the enemy in front of the entire line. I had ordered General Carroll to bring up his brigade, and it was now in supporting distance, displayed in line of battle. I now repeated my orders for a general advance, and soon the battle raged from right to left. When I sent my aid to order the Fifteenth Mississippi to charge, I sent by him an order to General Carroll to advance a regiment to sustain it. He ordered up for the purpose Colonel Murray's (Twenty-eighth Tennessee) regiment, which engaged the enemy on the left of the Mississippi regiment and on the right of Stanton's (Tennessee) regiment. I ordered Captain Rutledge, with two of his guns, forward in the road to an advanced and hazardous position, ordering Colonel Stanton to support him, where I hoped he might bring them to play effectively upon the enemy ; but the position did not permit this, and he soon retired under my order. At this point the horse of Captain Rutledge was killed

under him. Very soon the enemy began to gain ground on our left, and to use their superior force for flanking in that quarter.

“I was in person at the right of the line of Stanton’s regiment, the battle raging, and did not observe this so soon as it was seen by Colonel Carroll, who moved the regiment of Colonel Cummings, then commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, to the left, to meet this movement of the enemy, and formed the Seventeenth Tennessee, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Miller, to support the regiments on the left. The regiments of Murray, Stanton, and Cummings were driven back by the enemy, and while reforming in the rear of the Seventeenth Tennessee, that well-disciplined regiment met and held in check for some time the entire right wing of the Northern army. These regiments on my left and on the left of the road retired across the field a distance of about two hundred and fifty yards, and there for a time repulsed the advancing enemy. Especially the regiment of Colonel Stanton, partially rallied by its gallant field officers, formed behind a fence, and, pouring volleys into the ranks of the enemy coming across the field, repulsed and drove them back for a time with heavy loss.

“For an hour now the Fifteenth Mississippi, under Lieutenant-Colonel Walthall, and the Twentieth Tennessee, under Colonel Joel A. Battle, of my center and right, had been struggling with the superior force of the enemy.

“I can not omit to mention the heroic valor of these two regiments, officers and men. When the left retired they were flanked and compelled to leave their position. In their rear, on the right of the

road, was the regiment of Colonel Powell (Twenty-ninth Tennessee), which had been formed in the rear and ordered forward by me some time before. General Carroll ordered this regiment to face the flanking force of the enemy which was crossing the road from the left side, which it did, checking it with a raking fire at thirty paces. In this conflict Colonel Powell, commanding, was badly wounded. The Sixteenth Alabama, which was the reserve corps of my division, commanded by Colonel Wood, did at this critical juncture most eminent service. Having rushed behind the right and center, it came to a close engagement with the pursuing enemy, to protect the flanks and rear of the Fifteenth Mississippi and Twentieth Tennessee, when they were the last, after long fighting, to leave the front line of the battle; and, well led by its commanding officer, in conjunction with portions of other regiments, it effectually prevented pursuit and protected my return to camp.

“Owing to the formation and character of the field of battle I was unable to use my artillery and cavalry to advantage in the action. During much of the time the engagement lasted rain was falling. Many of the men were armed with flint-lock muskets, and they soon became unserviceable.

“On the field and during the retreat to camp some of the regiments became confused and broken, and great disorder prevailed. This was owing in some measure to a want of proper drill and discipline, of which the army had been much deprived by reason of the nature of its constant service and of the country in which it had encamped.

“During the engagement, or just prior to it, the



force under General Thomas was increased by the arrival, on a forced march, of a brigade from his rear, which I had hoped would not arrive until the engagement was over. This made the force of the enemy about twelve thousand men. My effective force was four thousand. The engagement lasted three hours."

## CHAPTER V.

### CORINTH AND PERRYVILLE.

Forts Henry and Donelson—Buell at Nashville—Battle of Pittsburg Landing—Defeat and flight of Beauregard—Thomas in command of the right wing—Siege of Corinth—Major general of volunteers—Resumes command of his division—Joins Buell at Louisville—Declines to supersede him—Battle of Perryville—McCook—Crittenden and Gilbert—Thomas no special command—Bragg retires—Buell relieved by Rosecrans—Thomas dissatisfied—In command of center—On to Murfreesboro—Bragg strongly posted.

As we have seen, the rapid retreat of the enemy after Mill Springs baffled further pursuit; and the hurly-burly of events in a different direction so occupied the military authorities that the scheme of marching to Knoxville, and thence to Chattanooga, was at once abandoned, or rather indefinitely postponed. It was impossible so to augment Thomas's force as to permit him to carry out such a plan.

The Confederate generals Floyd and Pillow, who had ignominiously escaped from Fort Donelson in a panic, had passed rapidly through Nashville and were closely followed by Buell's force. In order to retard the pursuit they had destroyed the suspen-

sion bridge, but Buell improvised crossings in boats, and was soon in possession of the capital of Tennessee, where he was joined by Thomas with his division.

In the meantime General Grant had marched down the Tennessee to a point called Pittsburg Landing. It had been selected by General Charles F. Smith, and there he was soon to be confronted by A. S. Johnston with a large Confederate army.

There are several moot questions connected with this battle of Pittsburg Landing, or Shiloh, which may or may not be settled after this generation has passed away. Was Grant's army surprised there? Was it so driven back and disabled that the battle would have been lost without the strong re-enforcements and assistance of Buell? We need not discuss these questions here. One fact is patent, however: the Army of the Tennessee was indeed very sorely pressed when Buell with the Army of the Ohio, on April 7th, moved at the most fortunate moment to its succor. Together they defeated the enemy. Whatever doubts there were of Grant's ability to maintain himself, they were dispelled by Buell's arrival, which was accelerated by the ever-increasing roar of artillery, telling him of the fierce contest going on around the little church of Shiloh and along the retiring left flank of Grant's army toward the landing itself.

General Albert Sidney Johnston, the Confederate

commander, had been killed early in the action, and General P. G. T. Beauregard, a thorough and valiant soldier, had succeeded to the command and driven back the left flank of Grant's army as upon a pivot. It was not an enviable task which Beauregard had thrust upon him, to assume command in the very heat of an action, planned by another; and now, pressed and outnumbered by this new force of Buell, he had no alternative but a precipitate retreat toward Corinth, an important strategic point twenty-nine miles from the battlefield of Pittsburg. The principal value of Corinth is that it lies at the junction of the Memphis and Charleston and the Mobile and Ohio Railroads, which are the lines of communication from the Mississippi to the Atlantic and from the Ohio to the Gulf of Mexico. Beauregard fortified this position, and there—to speak not quite technically—he was besieged by General Halleck, who had assumed the command of both Federal armies, now comprising a well-appointed force of about one hundred thousand men.

Beauregard's orders and proclamations indicate not only his view of the importance of the position, but of his power to maintain himself there, and induced in the Federal commander an excess of caution in his approach. Thomas, who had not come up in time to take part in the battle of Shiloh, being in the rear of Buell's column, was now placed by Halleck in command of the right wing, consist-

ing of several divisions—a recognition of his generalship which was very gratifying to him. In view of succeeding events, it is curious to note that at this time Sherman was temporarily under his command. In the opinion of the best military critics, Corinth might then have been taken by a vigorous assault; instead of that, it was formally besieged, and the siege lasted for more than a month. It should be mentioned, however, in partial extenuation of this delay, that the movements of the army were rendered difficult by numerous obstacles. From the time of starting, on April 9th, from Pittsburg Landing, the weather was continuously bad, the roads execrable, and much of the way needed to be corduroyed; add to these difficulties the fact that the exact condition of things within the lines of Corinth was unknown to the Federal commander; more so, perhaps, than it should have been.

Halleck, who had been an engineer officer, was thus prompted to invest a weakly intrenched place and approach it with all the technique of a movement upon a permanent work. The least that can be said is that he was overmastered by his excessive caution. He delayed attacking, he made manœuvres of approach, but he never did deliver a formal assault. At the last he was surprised that Beauregard had silently left the place, after having put some Quaker guns in position, still further to intimidate his halting enemy.

It was during this siege of Corinth, and on April 25, 1862, that Thomas received his promotion as major general of volunteers in somewhat tardy recognition of his excellent service at Mill Springs. He had nothing to do with the strategy or grand tactics of this movement, but was ready at any moment to launch his troops like a thunderbolt upon the intrenchments of Beauregard, and would doubtless have won further honor if the assault had been ordered. After the occupation of Corinth he was placed in temporary command, and remained there until June 22d. At that time, and at his own request, Thomas was returned to the command of his old division, and proceeded to join Buell in his further movements. This was a busy time for him. In beating up the enemy's quarters and looking out for his communications, he was ordered in succession to Huntsville, to Decherd, to Pelham, and to McMinnville, where, on the flank and front, discretion and forecast were needed. It was evident that he possessed both.

The plans of the Confederate commander Bragg were soon manifest. He was about to make a desperate experiment. He would combine his forces and invade Tennessee and Kentucky. At first it seemed that he would make Nashville his objective point, but before reaching it he appeared to deflect his army and to march upon Louisville. At this time General Halleck was created general in chief

of the army and called to Washington, and the task of confronting Bragg was confided to General Don Carlos Buell, who had divined the purposes of Bragg, and appears to have been master of the situation. He ordered Thomas to join him with four divisions without delay, and then proceeded with his advance column to Louisville, which he reached by a forced march on June 25th. This was greatly to the joy of the large loyal element in that capital, and to the amazement and bitter disgust of the secessionists. Thus Bragg's purpose to march on Louisville was thwarted.

Would his advance on Nashville be more successful? Ground had been lost, the Confederates were assuming the offensive; a great struggle was still in the near future. The Government at Washington, wanting great results, was dissatisfied even with this brilliant strategy of Buell, and was disposed to hold him responsible for this new and consequential invasion of Kentucky by the Confederate army. Without seeking for explanations, they relieved him summarily from his command of the Army of the Ohio, and ordered General Thomas to assume it. Thomas, however, was not the man to become the instrument of such injustice, and declared himself at once against it. Buell, who had deserved well of the republic, was humiliated by an unexpected blow. Besides, he was on the eve of a serious conflict for which he had made due and

careful preparation. He bore the blow with stoical philosophy, but Thomas telegraphed at once to ask that the order be withdrawn or suspended—an act which vindicated publicly his noble character. Most subordinate commanders would have jumped at the tempting opportunity. This was on September 29, 1862. The order was suspended, and on October 1st Buell marched out to give battle to Bragg, with Thomas as second in command.

This brings us to the battle of Perryville, which, in addition to being a fair stand-up fight in open field, was apparently intended by the Government to give Buell an opportunity to revindicate himself and satisfy their exacting impatience. Generals were to be tried and flung away with little regard to justice. Brilliant, not partial success, was what was required. Before considering this battle we may certify ourselves of the motives of Thomas's action. Many persons have attributed his protest against the removal of Buell entirely to diffidence of his own powers. This might indeed have been so. It is true that any general might hesitate to take command of an army on the eve of battle with the details of whose organization and administration he was not familiar, but in a great emergency such reluctance might have been overcome. Indeed, the order relieving Buell contained already these three provisos: he was not to be relieved "if he was in the presence of the enemy preparing to fight, if he



had gained a victory, or if Thomas was absent." General Thomas has, however, told us himself his reasons in simple and unmistakable language :

"I am not," he said, "as modest as I have been represented to be ; I did not request the retention of General Buell in command through modesty, but because his removal and my assignment were alike unjust to him and to me. It was unjust to him to relieve him on the eve of battle, and unjust to myself to impose upon me the command of the army at such a time."

But it should here be observed, that while he was more than willing under such circumstances to remain Buell's subordinate, it is not to be inferred that he would have been willing to let any other officer take the place he had declined, without remonstrance. He only refused it that Buell might retain it. We may say here, in passing, that the delay occasioned by the order and its suspension caused Buell the loss of twenty-four hours and a golden opportunity for which he was not responsible.

We need not dwell upon the battle of Perryville except so far as it relates to General Thomas, and that part is neither large nor important. In such a work as this details are unnecessary, and indeed impossible. We can give only the general movement of the battle and the part played by Thomas, which indeed was not a very prominent one. Subjected to

military criticism, the battle was faulty in many respects. Thomas, as second in command, was greatly trammelled, or rather his value was neutralized; he commanded no troops specifically; was supposed to have a general supervision of the field, but was really confined to such a position as his chief directed. His duties were therefore of a nondescript and ambiguous character. The Army of the Ohio had been divided into three corps, each consisting of three divisions. The First Corps was commanded by Major-General A. McD. McCook, the Second by Major-General Thomas L. Crittenden, and the Third by Colonel C. C. Gilbert, who had been nominated brigadier general of volunteers by the President, but not yet, nor ever, confirmed, by the Senate. Thomas was directed to make his headquarters with Crittenden's corps.

The situation in which the Union army now found itself was grave. The expeditions of Forrest and Morgan in July, 1862, had greatly restored the confidence of the secessionists in Kentucky and Tennessee. Murfreesboro had been captured by a *coup de main* on the 13th of July, and Buell's communications with Nashville were threatened. His dispatches were intercepted and false ones sent, and it was of the greatest importance to advance at once to check the enemy's temerity in attempting to turn his left flank.

Leaving Louisville on the 1st of October, Buell's

army was concentrated at Bardstown, about fifty miles south, on the 7th. A battle was imminent. It might have been postponed by Buell, but Bragg took the initiative. The intended order of the troops was: McCook on the left, Gilbert in the center, and Crittenden on the right. The Confederates were divided into two corps: the right under Polk, consisting of the divisions of Cheatham and Withers; the left under Hardee, with the divisions of Anderson and Buckner.

Unfortunately, however, the Federal order had not been completed. Crittenden had not yet arrived. Only two divisions of McCook's corps were in position, and against this incompleteness Bragg ordered three divisions in mass to be thrown.\* This attack fell principally upon McCook's left division, commanded by General Jackson, who was there and then killed. It was in great straits, and clamored for aid from the center, but succor did not come; and after a desperate conflict, McCook's left was driven back, and only rallied under cover of the center. Thus it did not entirely leave the field. The other division of McCook, which had come in advance under General Rousseau, was intended to maintain connection with the left division of Gilbert's corps; but, by a mischance, the left of Gilbert had been incautiously moved away, and there was a

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\* It was fighting for fully two hours before Buell received intelligence of the fact.

considerable gap just across Doctor's Creek, between himself and Rousseau's right. Into that opening, with a quick perception and by a flying march, Bragg had thrust Buckner's division. It had at once formed line on Rousseau's flank, facing it at right angles, and, unfortunately, neither the commanding general nor his second in command was on the field at that point to direct the prompt movement required by this emergency.

The situation was indeed most unexpected and anomalous—one Confederate division thrust between two Union divisions, and, as it were, flanking both, while six other Federal divisions were in its rear and could at a word have annihilated it. Buell was still at some distance in the rear. Thomas, occupying the nominal position of second in command, had been directed to take post with Crittenden's corps on the right. He therefore could have no just knowledge of what was transpiring on the left center.

It is easy enough now to see that if McCook's two divisions had changed front against Buckner, and if Gilbert also had made a wheel to the left with part of his force, Buckner's division would have been crushed or captured. A forward movement by Crittenden and a subsequent wheel to the left would have taken in flank and rear the entire attacking force of Bragg. But such movements required prompt intelligence of the situation and

concert of action, which, as we have seen, were impossible at that time.\*

These are criticisms after the battle. Later in the war, and with officers and troops more experienced in military problems, such mistakes were less liable to be made, and yet they sometimes were made. They form a severe part of military education, and the successful general is he who profits by such experience. The enemy did not follow up his advantage, although he had rudely broken the Union line. At nightfall General Buell, as soon as he comprehended the situation, sent orders to Thomas to move one division of Crittenden's to the center at the needed point, and two brigades to assist General Rousseau, who, although thrust back, was still contesting his ground against Buckner.

But, in spite of his partial success and the discomfiture of the Union army, strange to say, Bragg had no thought of continuing the contest. He had indeed telegraphed that a great Confederate victory was gained at Perryville, but it was a barren victory. He did not begin his retreat until the 12th of October. The Comte de Paris calls it very properly "a reverse for both parties," but in point of fact the advantage was with the federal troops.

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\* In point of fact, not more than half of Buell's army had really been engaged. The brunt of the action was borne by eleven brigades, and their terrible fighting is indicated by their loss in less than four hours of four thousand men. Crittenden was not on the field at all until dark, when the action was entirely over.

The Union army remained on the field, and Buell, before his retirement, had ordered Thomas to proceed to Glasgow and Bowling Green, while Bragg, his plans defeated and a new combination being rendered necessary, fell back into Tennessee. The withdrawal of the Confederate forces to the South and the occupation of the field of battle by the Federals were at first regarded at Washington as indications of good success, but as fuller tidings were received this opinion was changed, and the Government, being dissatisfied with Buell, again determined to relieve him from the command. He had, whether anticipating this action or not, retired to Louisville, leaving Thomas in his place.

It would be naturally concluded that now Thomas would receive and accept the command. Most persons were therefore very much surprised, and Thomas himself most painfully so, when it was found that another general was to be appointed—General Rosecrans, whose success against General Price at Iuka had already commended him to the favorable notice of the Government. He was indeed by a few days the junior of General Thomas as a major general, and the date of commission, while it was not absolutely an assurance of promotion, was at that time, *cæteris paribus*, a recognized factor in preferment to command; and certainly Thomas had already exhibited such a genius for war as gave him every reason to expect the promotion. He felt ex-

tremely humiliated, and made dignified expostulations. The Government thought, or affected to think, that when before the battle of Perryville he had declined to supersede Buell, he meant to express a permanent disinclination to assume command, a diffidence of his own powers, and a desire to evade responsibility. Nothing could be more absurd or farther from the truth. The reasons for his former action have already been fully given. That action showed him to be a man at once generous and just. That conjuncture belonged to the past. No such reasons now existed, and in considering this new condition of affairs we can not do better than to let him speak for himself, as he has done in his letter to General Halleck. With commendable dignity he passes in rapid review the principal events of his short but brilliant career and his just claims to the consideration of the Government. Speaking of the former occasion, when the order relieving General Buell was suspended at his request, he says :

“The order relieving him and placing me in command was suspended at my request, but to-day I find him relieved by General Rosecrans, my junior, although I do not feel conscious that any just cause exists for overslaughing me by placing me under my junior, and I am therefore deeply mortified and grieved at the course taken in this matter.”

In his answer General Halleck repeats the mis-

apprehension in these words : " You having virtually declined the command at that time, it was necessary to appoint another, and General Rosecrans was selected. It was not possible to give you command after you had declined it."

It is not the part of a just historian to impute motives without just grounds, but the biographer must express his astonishment that the opportunity was not offered to Thomas and thus the chance of misconception avoided. At any rate, it would seem that they wanted Rosecrans more than they did Thomas. The whole question was thoroughly discussed at Washington, and when they determined to put Rosecrans at the head of that army he was the junior not only of Thomas but of McCook and Crittenden. Where there is a will there is a way ; so, in order to remedy that obstacle, his commission as a major general, which had been dated August 16th, while Thomas's was April 25th, was now arbitrarily changed to March 21st. After all, we are forced to the conclusion that, passing over all who had been involved in the check at Perryville, they wanted a new man ; they should only have been honest enough to say so.

It should be borne in mind that another factor of the greatest importance in this struggle had now appeared in the preliminary proclamation of President Lincoln, issued on the 22d of September, just before the battle of Perryville, giving notice that on



the 1st of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or any part of a State the people whereof should then be in rebellion against the United States should be thenceforward and forever free. This was the prompt, irresistible, inexorable logic of events, which moves rapidly to its conclusions. Just one month before, on the 22d of August, he had said to Mr. Greeley: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would do that." One month later he had freed the slaves of all that were in rebellion, and a little more than three months after that, on the 1st of January, 1863, the decree went forth that negro slavery was abolished throughout the land. This, soon sanctioned by Congress, became a supreme law, and affected the use of negroes in both armies. But it was so thoroughly a foregone conclusion, that it had already entered into the plans of many of the loyal generals.\*

Immediately upon his appointment Rosecrans lost no time in preparations for the new campaign

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\* Just how it would affect certain generals was still a matter of doubt, and it may be that, with some lingering of his first suspicion as to Thomas, Lincoln may have preferred not to give him so important a command.

in Tennessee. Under date of October 24th the Department of the Cumberland had been reformed, to include that part of Tennessee lying east of the Tennessee River, and the army now commanded by Rosecrans was again called the Army of the Cumberland. This was divided into three corps—the right, center, and left—commanded respectively by Generals McCook, Thomas, and Crittenden.

The two contending forces made busy preparation for a new conflict. From the 7th of November to the 26th of December the main army of Rosecrans was encamped around Nashville, while numerous expeditionary movements were made to feel the enemy and to guard the approaches. The railroads were secured, magazines established, and the men thoroughly equipped for the impending movement. Bragg's army was intrenched around Murfreesboro, about forty miles south, where Rosecrans was ordered to attack him, unless he should assume the initiative and advance upon Rosecrans.

Thomas had wisely declined to be retained as second in command, having observed in the case of Grant at Corinth, and having experienced in his own case in the last battle, that it meant rank without authority or power. There would, in my judgment, have been a different story to tell of Perryville if he had commanded a corps there. He now accepted the command of the center corps, because, as was happily proved afterward, he could exercise im-

plicit authority, maintain perfect relations with the other corps, and have credit for what he accomplished. His corps was now larger than the others. It consisted of four divisions, while the rest had only three. His division commanders were Generals Rousseau, Negley, Dumont, and Fry.

Whatever criticisms may hereafter be made upon the career of General Rosecrans, he was then known as a fighting man and a good general. In the earliest days of the war he had beaten the enemy at Rich Mountain and Carnifex Ferry. Later he had won a victory over Price at Iuka, and had driven that general and Van Dorn away from Corinth. He had graduated in the engineers at West Point, and had well-formed notions of the science of war. He entered upon his new duties with alacrity and vigor, and to have a man like Thomas at his right hand was a tower of strength. He meant business. His first care was to restore the communications by railroad from Louisville to Nashville, and thus to establish two strong bases of supplies; or rather, we might say, the whole railroad line formed, so to speak, a long connecting base between the two, upon which the army could depend. This precaution being well taken, and the work thoroughly accomplished principally by Thomas's troops, the great object in view was to beat up Bragg's quarters at Murfreesboro or wherever he could find him, drive him from Tennessee, capture Chattanooga, and bring the whole

State finally and permanently into the Union ranks. They had been long enough trying to do this. It was high time to accomplish it.\* Thomas's troops were constantly in motion. With his headquarters at Gallatin, he had superintended the repairs and fortification of the railroad between the two capitals. Large magazines of supplies and munitions had been formed at Nashville and at the secondary base, Louisville. Toward the end of December everything was in readiness. The army was put in motion, the corps marched by different roads but within supporting distance upon Murfreesboro. Thomas was in advance with two divisions and two brigades on the Franklin road; the rest of his corps were still detached but would soon join him.† On the 30th of December the whole Union army was in front of Murfreesboro. Such was the impetuosity of Rosecrans that he thought Bragg had evacuated the town. Instead of making a careful reconnoissance he ordered Crittenden to occupy it, but soon he found out that he was mistaken; Bragg was entrenched in an exceedingly strong line, and was as full of fight as his Union enemy.

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\* Bragg's army from the 19th to the 26th of October was passing through Cumberland Gap, and thence he moved to Chattanooga, the objective point, whence, after due reorganization and preparation, he might set out to intercept and fight Rosecrans.

† McCook marched by the Nolensville road, and Crittenden by the direct road to Murfreesboro. All moved cautiously upon that town, expecting, indeed, to meet the enemy at Triune.

Indeed, he was waiting for him this time, as before, on his chosen field of battle, not in ambush or in the employment of stratagem, but in open and defiant array. He had the retreat from Perryville, which was equal to a defeat, to atone for, and the Confederate authorities were as urgent that he should overthrow Rosecrans as the headquarters at Washington were that Rosecrans should destroy him. His was already the losing cause, and the most desperate efforts were needed to restore it to hopeful vigor. These efforts General Bragg made to the utmost of his ability.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BATTLE OF STONE'S RIVER.\*

The field—Bragg's line—Defensive-offensive—First Union move—The right wing routed—The left pushed back—The center retired—Possible withdrawal—"This army can't retreat"—New position—Semicircle of fire—Thomas repulses attack with promptness and skill—Crittenden crosses the river—Driven back—Union artillery scatters enemy—Bragg abandons his wounded—First telegram to Richmond—The bloody crossing—Federal victory—New arrangement of corps—Campaign of Tullahoma—Long rest and delay.

WE must pause for a moment to take a glance at the battlefield soon to be resonant with the thunders of warfare and bloody from the holocaust of victims. Before doing so we present a brief outline of the numerical strength and composition of the contending armies. The Army of the Cumberland, organized as the Fourteenth Army Corps, consisted of two wings and a center. The right wing, commanded by General A. McD. McCook, was com-

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\* I have adopted the geographical name of this river, although it would be more commonly called Stone River, as it has been in the past. It is spelled Stone's River in the reports, etc., contained in the War of the Rebellion Record. In Lippincott's Gazetteer, however, it is given as Stone River.

posed of three divisions, commanded respectively by General Jefferson C. Davis, General Richard W. Johnson, and General P. H. Sheridan. The left wing was commanded by General T. L. Crittenden. The three divisions of which it was composed were commanded respectively by Generals T. J. Wood, John M. Palmer, and H. P. Van Cleve. The center, under Thomas, had for its division commanders Generals Rousseau, Negley, S. S. Fry, who seems to have replaced Generals Dumont and R. B. Mitchell. A fifth division, not engaged at Stone's River, was commanded by General J. J. Reynolds. Each of these large commands had an adequate contingent of artillery, and Thomas had portions of three regiments of cavalry, but the body of the cavalry was formed into a division under the command of General D. S. Stanley. Such was the Union army. By the night of December 30th they were in position.

To meet it and arrest its progress, the Confederate Army of the Tennessee, commanded by General Bragg, consisted of two corps under Generals Polk and Hardee. The divisions of Polk's corps were commanded by Cheatham and Withers, and each contained four very heavy brigades. Hardee's corps was composed of two divisions under Breckinridge and Cleburne. McCown's divisions of Kirby Smith's army were temporarily serving with Hardee in this action. General Joseph Wheeler was in command of all the cavalry, formed into four brigades, one of

which was commanded by himself and the other three by Buford, Pegram, and Wharton.

To a cursory glance before the action the chances of the combatants seemed to be about even; there was little disparity in force, for, while Rosecrans had forty-three thousand men, Bragg had about forty-six thousand. The latter had the advantage of position carefully selected and thoroughly intrenched; his slight excess of numbers was made up by excellent re-enforcements from the corps of Kirby Smith, and he was burning with desire to retrieve what, after all, was the disaster at Perryville. Apparently acting on the defensive, he was like the lion crouched for a spring.

On the other hand, the Union army had the prestige of advance, which is much in itself. It had a new confidence in a fresh general who had won laurels in other fields. It had a thorough and far better reorganization since Perryville. Crittenden would have a chance to fight, McCook an opportunity to retrieve himself, and Thomas, no longer second in command, would be permitted to show his superb staying and supporting power; for the battle was to be fought on different lines from those originally projected.

And now let us look at the field upon which was to be achieved a signal victory, in winning which Thomas played a most brilliant part. Murfreesboro is situated on the west fork of Stone's River, or



rather about a mile east of it. The flow of the stream is a little west of north, and it empties into the Cumberland about five miles from Nashville. Less than ten miles below Murfreesboro it is joined by Overall Creek. The battle was fought in part between these two streams and on both sides of Stone's River. The Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad follows the general northwestern direction of the river.

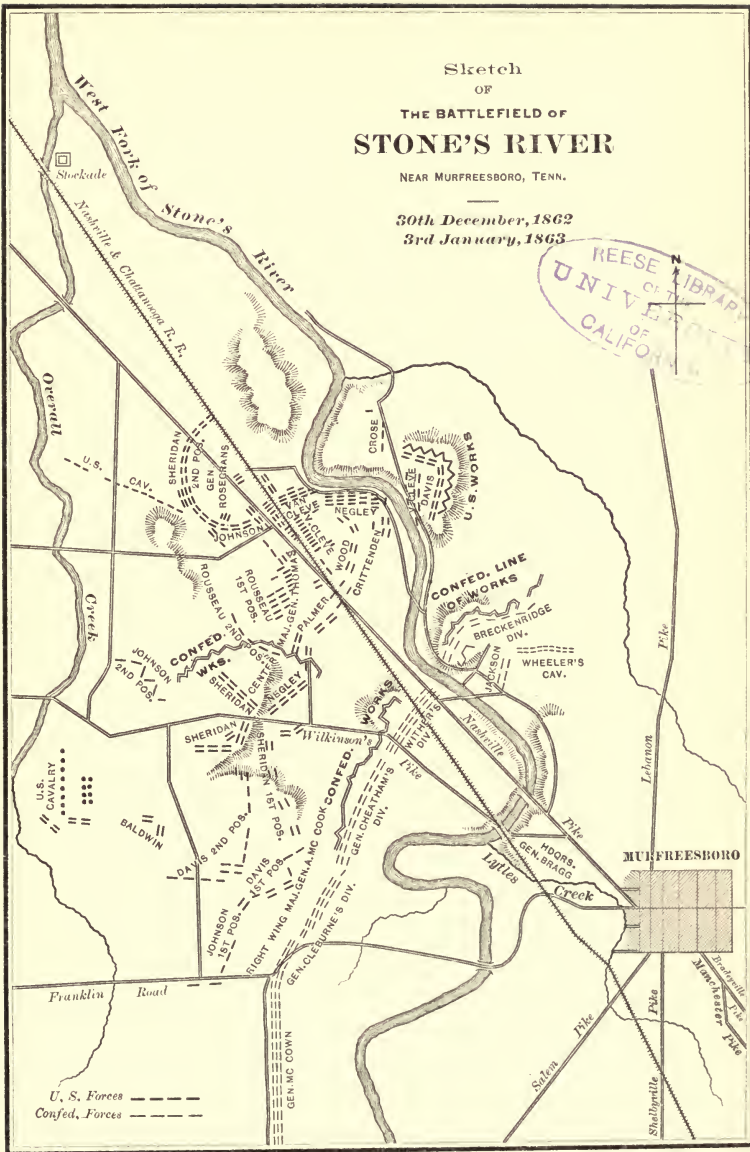
General Bragg, who thus far seemed to be entirely on the defensive, had intrenched himself in a strong line in front of Murfreesboro and on the left bank, with his right crossing the stream about two miles in front of the town. Most of his line was drawn up in a strong triple formation. The division on his left was that of McCown, temporarily detached from Kirby Smith. That flank was covered by Wharton's brigade of cavalry. In first formation, at least, the order from left to right was—Cleburne, Cheatham, Withers—and across the river, forming the extreme right, was the division of Breckinridge, supported on the flank by Wheeler with the remaining three brigades of cavalry. Bragg's headquarters were in the rear on the east side of the river and on the Nashville turnpike. I have said that Bragg was on the defensive-offensive. He would await the attack of the advancing Union army with the hope of defeating it so thoroughly that he might pursue it back into the coveted border States to resuscitate the

secession spirit and to take all the chances which fortune should throw into his hands; or, if that were delayed, he would himself attack. His hopes were high and his troops confident. He had not long to wait. Upon this strong Confederate line the Union army was about to advance. On the right, on high ground near the Franklin pike, opposite the strong Confederate left, was McCook's corps.

As the Confederate line extended beyond McCook's right, making his line a very faulty one, which Rosecrans had recognized, but not corrected, he resorted to a stratagem. The night before the action he extended his line by false camp fires for some distance, the result of which was the strong extension of the enemy's line, which was to take McCook in flank and rear at the very first onset. On the left, in a bend of the river, was Crittenden's wing. Thomas, with the center on a rolling slope, was either to act independently or as a reserve in support of the right or left, as circumstances might require. It was now daybreak of December 31st. The enemy's left unfortunately extended beyond McCook's right as he was coming into position, and this gave them a great advantage over him. They advanced to the attack, and their assault was delivered with such vigor that the Union right wing was at once turned, was driven back and to the left a long distance, and in their retreat fell upon Thomas's two divisions, which were fortu-

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nately enabled to stem the current setting like a mill race to the rear. The Confederates claimed, although no doubt their account is exaggerated, that in this attack the right of the Union army was entirely surprised. The artillery horses were not harnessed, and so several Federal batteries were captured. In any case the situation was bad enough. The Union right was pushed back during five hours of incessant fighting, brigade after brigade being led in by the enemy with great impetuosity to complete the work. It was here that Sheridan signalized himself by the splendid fighting of his division against attacks in front and flank, and even in rear : when he did fall back it was in part for lack of ammunition. Negley also did much with his division partially to stem the tide. Rousseau was ordered to the right and rear of Sheridan. Thomas was also there, and was to prove a tower of defense in this emergency. His policy had been to make two partial changes of front, falling back in good order and refusing his right. Prisoners were taken and guns were lost during these movements, in Johnson's and Sheridan's divisions. Having thus thrust back as upon a pivot the Union right, Bragg then determined to crush the left flank, which was held by Palmer's division, and two brigades of Wood's division, constituting the principal portion of Crittenden's troops, and supported by one brigade of Sheridan's division of McCook's corps. In the mean-

time Rosecrans, instead of re-enforcing McCook, formed, by the aid of Thomas, a new line of battle on several oval-shaped hills and also on a crest in rear of the left, from which, by a concentrated semicircular fire of artillery in all directions, he might resist the attacks of the enemy from any direction. He wisely masked his artillery, and the troops lay behind the eminences, guns and men awaiting the attack. Fifty of these guns were placed on the left of this new line, and would give a good account of those rash enough to assail them. The general and the troops were fully awake to the situation, and Thomas was the hero of the occasion. Thus much of the battle had taken place on the 31st of December and had seemed decidedly to go against the Union army. Encouraged by his great success, Bragg ordered his left center, which had also swung around to the right, to make a final assault at sunset—intended to be a *coup de grace*. It did indeed shake the Union troops just taking position on their new line, but it was at last thoroughly repelled or held in check, while Thomas was slowly retiring. To form this new line, General Thomas with five brigades had stopped the advance on the Federal right and had thus saved the army. In the words of Van Horne, "General Thomas gained greater distinction in other battles, but never did he meet a crisis with more promptness and skill." There is a story that late that night, at a meeting of the prin-

cial officers, something was said about a possible retreat, and Rosecrans awakened Thomas, who had fallen asleep, and put to him the question, "Will you protect the rear on retreat?" Starting out of his slumber, Thomas ejaculated, "This army can't retreat!" and at once fell asleep again. In justice to Rosecrans it should be said that nothing could have been more gallant than his conduct in the succeeding conflict, especially as he rode down to the Round forest under the concentrated fire of the enemy. It was then that Colonel Garesché, his aid, had his head taken off by a cannon shot at his side, and three orderlies were killed in quick succession.

Rosecrans adopted the opinion that the army could not retreat. On the morning of the 1st of January he had concluded in his own words "to fight or die." Provisions and ammunition were rapidly brought up from the rear. The men were in good spirits and condition; they were now almost impreguably posted. If the enemy was not ready to attack they would resume the offensive; they would anticipate Bragg's purpose to assault the Union left. With this purpose General Crittenden sent several brigades across the river to threaten the enemy's right. These brigades were fiercely attacked by the Confederates under Breckinridge, who pursued them to and across the river to a considerable distance, but the pursuers rushed into a terrible trap. It was then that the fifty guns masked on the left of

Crittenden's corps opened upon their advance with a murderous fire, before which they recoiled in dismay. And at that juncture Colonel John F. Miller with a brigade of Negley's division, which had been sent from Thomas to re-enforce Crittenden, fell upon them, drove them at the point of the bayonet through and beyond their own line of works toward Murfreesboro. The entire situation was changed. Bragg had expended his fury in these attacks. The discomfiture of his right settled the question. His hopes were destroyed. He made some desultory and faint attacks upon Thomas's center, which were promptly met and repulsed; and so, on the night of January 3d and on the morning of the 4th, leaving his dead and wounded behind, he retired rapidly to the South. The Union army had lost eight thousand five hundred, and the Confederates, according to General Bragg's report, over ten thousand. There is such a discrepancy in the accounts of the capture of prisoners on both sides, that it is very difficult to get at the truth, even by a collation and comparison of the official reports.

The partial success of Bragg at Perryville has led the Southern historian to claim a victory there, but he acknowledges his defeat at Stone's River. A great defeat it was in its consequences, injurious as they proved to be to the Confederate arms. The moral disaster was also immense. He had lost middle Tennessee, and with it the confidence of the Con-



federate authorities. For some time before the action Bragg had abandoned the idea that Rosecrans would attack him. His well-appointed army of between forty and fifty thousand men had been passing a delightful time at Murfreesboro. It was the scene of joy and festivity. Gay parties in the town and in the camp were the order of the day. There seemed to be no apprehension for the immediate future, and especially did the grand Christmas ball give a new and famous illustration of Byron's Waterloo. Just one week after, the fields around Murfreesboro were thickly strewn with the dead of both armies—

“Rider and horse, friend, foe, in one red burial blent.”

The day after Christmas, in the midst of a steady rain, the news had come in that the Union army was on its march, and this had been to Bragg in the nature of a surprise. To summarize further, we have seen that the action of the 31st had given to the Confederate forces a decided success. The Union troops had been driven back for a long distance, and had lost many prisoners and guns. It was then that Bragg had prematurely telegraphed to Richmond, proclaiming the news of a great victory before it had been half achieved. His words were, “God has granted us a happy New Year.”

When night came down upon the 1st of January the loss and the carnage were evidenced by the fact that two thousand men had fallen in the single at-

tack of Breckinridge on the Union left. The Confederates appropriately call it the bloody crossing of Stone's River.

On Sunday morning, January 4th, a reconnoissance disclosed the departure of Bragg's army, and Murfreesboro was occupied by the Federal troops. Thomas entered the town on Monday, January 5th, preceded by Stanley's cavalry. Rosecrans did not proceed farther, but remained there to reorganize and recruit, and wait for more favorable weather. The authorities at Washington and the whole country were overjoyed at the success. Congratulatory orders were issued, and eulogistic resolutions were passed by Congress and the Legislatures of several Northern States.

It would, of course, have been well if Rosecrans could have followed Bragg immediately, and to the public mind this seemed possible; but the military critic knows that after such a hard-fought battle an orderly pursuit can not be made. Whether six months were necessary for reorganization and a partial state of inaction was warranted, are more questionable considerations. Long stays in permanent camps are not beneficial to troops. But more of this hereafter.

Measured by the actual conditions of the battlefield, it was a Union victory. The enemy had been repulsed at all points, the disaster to the right wing on the first day had been splendidly retrieved on the

following days, and then Bragg had retired from the field, leaving his wounded behind.

Major William Lambert, in his admirable oration at Rochester before the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, happily epitomizes the value of Thomas's services in this action: "At Stone's River, when, in spite of Sheridan's superb stand, the troops upon Thomas's right, flanked and overborne, were forced back; when his left was alike exposed by the retirement of its immediate supports, and he was compelled to fight on front and flanks: the rapidity with which he changed front while thus heavily engaged, and, forming line at right angles to his first position, gave direction and stability to the army's new formation, not less than the sturdiness with which he fought his division throughout the entire action; and the vigor with which he asserted in the night conference 'This army can't retreat,' made his service in this battle second only to that he rendered at Chickamauga."

It has been thought by some critics that Rosecrans was in as good a condition for an immediate advance as Bragg was for an orderly retreat. This is hardly just. After so bloody a battle there must be time to rest and recover, and, to say the least of it, the new campaign of Rosecrans required the collection of supplies for at least twenty-five days' subsistence, the carrying of ammunition for at least two great battles, the securing of the railroad commu-

fications, and a great increase to the cavalry ; for the enemy's cavalry were ten or twelve thousand strong, and we had a very inadequate force to cope with it.

Rosecrans made a change of designation in the commands. Instead of right and left wings and center, the army was divided into corps, McCook having command of the Twentieth, Thomas of the Fourteenth, and Crittenden of the Twenty-first.

It is hardly necessary to dwell farther upon the splendid services of Thomas and his corps in this battle. In the great rush of McCook's corps to the rear on the first day he stood firm at the right center, stemming the apparently resistless tide, while he established the new line and made the later arrangements practicable. He massed the artillery on the heights, brought the pursuit to a standstill, and then converted it into a disastrous retreat. Now that the confusion of reports and dispatches has been brought into something like order, Thomas emerges from the record as the most important and prominent man of that field—a man destined, if he should be spared, for greater achievements. His newly designated Fourteenth Corps consisted of four divisions, commanded respectively by Generals Rousseau, Negley, Brannan, and J. J. Reynolds, all good men and true, and to be thoroughly tested in the next great action between the two armies.

It seemed that the time of that action was at hand, for during the early months of the year, while

Rosecrans was resting and reorganizing at Murfreesboro, Bragg had established his headquarters at Tullahoma, a small town on Rock Creek, thirty-two miles from Murfreesboro, and at the junction of two trunk lines of railroad, the Nashville and Chattanooga and the McMinnville and Manchester. It was a good defensive position, if Bragg really meant it to be a base of operations; it would enable him to move rapidly on an interior line from that part of the Tennessee River where it forms the boundary between Mississippi and Alabama, to that other part where it covers Chattanooga.

It seems more than probable, however, that this conduct of Bragg was of the nature of a feint to deceive Rosecrans, and to draw him off from a direct movement, while he perfected his plans with regard to Chattanooga.

Thus began what has been dignified by the name of the Tullahoma campaign; it was of only ten days' duration—from the 23d day of June to the 4th of July. Rosecrans was not deceived. If Bragg meant it in earnest, he would drive him from his defenses on Duck River, with his headquarters at Tullahoma, or fall upon his line of communication and cut him off from Chattanooga. Bragg did not wait for Rosecrans's coming. Thomas, with the Fourteenth Corps, moved toward Manchester and threatened his right, whereupon the Twentieth Corps was moved upon Liberty Gap, and this gave McCook an

opportunity to retrieve his ill fortune at Stone's River. Thomas moved to Hooven's Gap. Thus, with his flank threatened at Tullahoma, after a show of resistance, Bragg retreated to Chattanooga.

The movements of Thomas from Manchester and of McCook from Tullahoma were unable to bring him to a stand; he burned the bridges and crossed the Cumberland range, and Rosecrans was now free to make his plans for a more direct advance upon Chattanooga. The possession of the gaps in that line had been feebly contested by the enemy simply to gain time; they were now held by Thomas and McCook, while Crittenden, with the left wing, would find no opposition in a direct march upon this mountain range.

It was thought that the spirit of action infused in the Union army by this movement to Tullahoma would increase in strength, and lead Rosecrans to move at once upon Bragg's new position; but there was to be another long and unfortunate delay, and the reader chafes, as the authorities at Washington did, as he foresees the results which were to follow. We may here anticipate a little. Bragg was at Chattanooga, but it was manifest that he could not continue to hold the town; Rosecrans could cut him off from his Southern communications. He must come outside and fight him. Should Bragg defeat him, he could hold Chattanooga; should he be defeated, he could retreat to the South.

Halting on the northwestern side of the Cumberland Mountains, Rosecrans continued his plans and preparations for crossing the Tennessee. The precious months of summer were passing, the enemy was consolidating and strengthening his schemes of resistance, and explicit orders were being sent from Washington urging Rosecrans to move; so that, when he did, it was under pressure.

General Halleck said he was blamed at Washington for not urging Rosecrans to move forward more rapidly, while Rosecrans was blaming him for that very urgency. It is impossible to decide in such a case. It is worthy of observation, however, that in the case of several generals of the highest order the impatience of the Government at Washington has been proved unjust and injurious, and so the benefit of the doubt may be given to Rosecrans.

During the long inaction of the Army of the Cumberland, from January to June, while thousands of officers and men were procuring leave of absence, Thomas did not ask for a furlough, which he might have had, to visit his wife and friends at the North.

*Extracts from General Thomas's Report of Stone's River.*

"HEADQUARTERS (CENTRE) FOURTEENTH ARMY CORPS,  
 "DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND,  
 "MURFREESBORO, *January 15, 1863.*

"MAJOR: I have the honor to submit to the major general commanding the Department of the Cumberland the following report of the operations

of that part of my command which was engaged in the battle of Stone's River, in front of Murfreesboro. It is proper to state here that two brigades of Fry's division and Reynolds's entire division were detained near Gallatin and along the Louisville and Nashville Railroad to watch the movements of the rebel leader Morgan, who had been for a long time on the watch for an opportunity to destroy the railroad.

"Rousseau's, Negley's, and Mitchell's divisions and Walker's brigade of Fry's division were concentrated at Nashville; but Mitchell's division being required to garrison Nashville, my only available force was Rousseau's and Negley's divisions and Walker's brigade of Fry's division—about 13,395 effective men.

"*December 26th.*—Negley's division, followed by Rousseau's division and Walker's brigade, marched by the Franklin pike to Brentwood, at that point taking the Wilson pike. Negley and Rousseau were to have encamped for the night at Owens's Store. On reaching the latter place, Negley, hearing heavy firing in the direction of Nolensville, left his train with a guard to follow, and pushed forward with his troops to the support of Brigadier-General J. C. Davis's command, the advance division of McCook's corps, Davis having become hotly engaged with the enemy posted in Nolensville and in the pass through the hills south of that village. Rousseau encamped with his division at Owens's Store; Walker with his brigade at Brentwood. During the night a very heavy rain fell, making the crossroads almost impassable, and it was not until the night of the 27th that Rousseau reached Nolensville with his troops and train. Negley remained at Nolensville until 10



A. M. on the 27th, when, having brought his train across from Wilson pike, he moved to the east over an exceedingly rough byroad to the right of Crittenden, at Stewartsboro, on the Murfreesboro pike. Walker, by my orders, retraced his steps from Brentwood and crossed over to the Nolensville pike.

*"December 28th.*—Negley remained in camp at Stewartsboro, bringing his train from the rear. Rousseau reached Stewartsboro on the night of the 28th; his train arrived early next day.

*"December 29th.*—Negley's division crossed Stewart's Creek, two miles southwest and above the turnpike bridge, and marched in support of the head and right flank of Crittenden's corps, which moved by the Murfreesboro pike to a point within two miles of Murfreesboro. The enemy fell back before our advance, contesting the ground obstinately with their cavalry rear guard. Rousseau remained in camp at Stewartsboro, detaching Starkweather's brigade with a section of artillery to the Jefferson pike, crossing Stone's River, to observe the movements of the enemy in that direction. Walker reached Stewartsboro from the Nolensville pike about dark.

*"December 30th.*—A cavalry force of the enemy, something over four hundred strong, with two pieces of artillery, attacked Starkweather about 9 A. M., but were soon driven off. The enemy opened a brisk fire on Crittenden's advance, doing but little execution, however. About 7 A. M. during the morning Negley's division was obliqued to the right, and took up a position on the right of Palmer's division of Crittenden's corps, and was then advanced through a dense cedar thicket, several hundred

yards in width, to the Wilkinson crossroads, driving the enemy's skirmishers steadily and with considerable loss—our loss comparatively small. About noon Sheridan's division of McCook's corps approached by the Wilkinson crossroads, joined Negley's right, McCook's two other divisions coming up on Sheridan's right, thus forming a continuous line, the left resting on Stone's River, the right stretching in a westerly direction and resting on high wooded ground a short distance to the south of the Wilkinson crossroads, and, as has since been ascertained, nearly parallel with the enemy's intrenchments, thrown up on the sloping land bordering the northwest bank of Stone's River, Rousseau's division, with the exception of Starkweather's brigade, being ordered up on the Murfreesboro pike in the rear of the center. During the night of the 30th I sent orders to Walker to take up a strong position near the turnpike bridge over Stewart's Creek and defend the position against any attempts of the enemy's cavalry to destroy it. Rousseau was ordered to move by 6 A. M. on the 31st to a position in rear of Negley. This position placed his division with its left on the Murfreesboro pike and its right extending into the cedar thicket through which Negley had marched on the 30th. In front of Negley's position, bordering a large open field reaching to the Murfreesboro pike, a heavy growth of timber extended in a southerly direction toward the river. Across the field, running in an easterly direction, the enemy had thrown up rifle-pits at intervals from the timber to the river bank, to the east side of the turnpike. Along this line of intrenchments, on an eminence about eight hundred yards from Negley's position,

and nearly in front of his left, some cannon had been placed, affording the enemy great advantage in covering an attack on our center. However, Palmer, Negley, and Sheridan held the position their troops had so manfully won on the morning of the 30th against every attempt to drive them back, and remained in line of battle during the night.

"*December 31st.*—Between 6 and 7 A. M., the enemy, having massed a heavy force on McCook's right during the night of the 30th, attacked and drove it back, pushing his division in pursuit in echelon and supporting distance until he had gained sufficient ground to our rear to wheel his masses to the right and throw them upon the right flank of the center, at the same moment attacking Negley and Palmer in front with a greatly superior force. To counteract this movement I had ordered Rousseau to place two brigades with a battery to the right and rear of Sheridan's division, facing toward the west, so as to support Sheridan should he be able to hold his ground, or to cover him should he be compelled to fall back. About eleven o'clock General Sheridan reported to me that his ammunition was entirely out, and he would be compelled to fall back to get more. As it became necessary for General Sheridan to fall back, the enemy pressed on still farther to our rear, and soon took up a position which gave them a concentrated cross-fire of musketry and cannon on Negley's and Rousseau's troops at short range. This compelled me to fall back out of the cedar woods and take up a line along a depression in the open ground within good musket range of the edge of the woods, while the artillery was retired to the high ground to the right

of the turnpike. From this last position we were enabled to drive back the enemy, cover the formation of our troops, and secure the center on the high ground. In the execution of this last movement, the regular brigade, under Lieutenant-Colonel Sheperd, Eighteenth United States Infantry, came under a most murderous fire, losing twenty-two officers and five hundred and eight men in killed and wounded, but, with the co-operation of Scribner's and Beatty's brigades and Guenther's and Loomis's batteries, gallantly held its ground against overwhelming odds. The center having succeeded in driving back the enemy from its front, and our artillery concentrating its fire on the cedar thicket on our right, drove him back far under cover, from which, though attempting it, he could not make any advance.

*“January 1, 1863.*—Repeated attempts were made by the enemy to advance on my position during the morning, but they were driven back before emerging from the woods. Colonel Starkweather's brigade of Rousseau's division, and Walker's brigade of Fry's division, having re-enforced us during the night, took post on the right of Rousseau and left of Sheridan, and bore their share in repelling the attempts of the enemy on the morning of the 1st instant. For the details of the most valuable service rendered by these two brigades on the 30th and 31st of December, 1862, and the 1st, 2d, and 3d of January, 1863, I refer you to their reports. In this connection I also refer you to the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Parkhurst, commanding the Ninth Michigan Infantry (on provost duty at my headquarters), for the details of most valuable service

rendered by his command on the 31st of December and 1st and 2d of January. Negley's division was ordered early in the day to the support of McCook's right, in which position it remained during the night.

*"January 2d.*—About 7 A. M. the enemy opened a direct and cross-fire from his batteries in our front, and along our position on the east bank of Stone's River to our left and front, at the same time making a strong demonstration with infantry, resulting, however, in no serious attack. Our artillery—Loomis's, Guenther's, Stokes's, and another battery (the commander's name I can not now recall)—soon drove back their infantry. Negley was withdrawn from the extreme right and placed in reserve behind Crittenden's right. About 4 P. M. a division of Crittenden's corps, which had crossed Stone's River to reconnoiter, was attacked by an overwhelming force of the enemy, and, after a gallant resistance, compelled to fall back. The movements of the enemy having been observed and reported by some of my troops in the center, I sent orders to Negley to advance to the support of Crittenden's troops should they want help. This order was obeyed in most gallant style, and resulted in the complete annihilation of the Twenty-sixth Tennessee rebel regiment and the capture of their flags; also in the capture of a battery, which the enemy had been forced to abandon, at the point of the bayonet. (See Negley's report.)

*"January 3d.*—Soon after daylight the Forty-second Indiana, on picket in a clump of woods about eight hundred yards in front of our lines, was attacked by a brigade of the enemy, evidently by superior numbers, and driven in with considerable loss. Lieutenant-Colonel Shankling, commanding the regi-

ment, was surrounded and taken prisoner while gallantly endeavoring to draw off his men from under the fire of such superior numbers. From these woods the enemy's sharpshooters continued to fire occasionally during the day on our pickets. About 6 P. M. two regiments from Colonel John Beatty's brigade of Rousseau's division, co-operating with two regiments of Spear's brigade of Negley's division, covered by the skillful and well-directed fire of Guenther's Fifth United States Artillery and Loomis's First Michigan batteries, advanced on the woods and drove the enemy not only from its cover, but from their intrenchments a short distance beyond. For the details of this gallant night attack I refer you to the reports of Brigadier-General Spear, commanding Third Brigade of Negley's division, and Colonel John Beatty, commanding Second Brigade of Rousseau's division.

"The enemy having retreated during the night of the 3d, our troops were occupied during the morning of the 4th in burying the dead left on the field. In the afternoon one brigade of Negley's division was advanced to the crossing of Stone's River, with a brigade of Rousseau's division in supporting distance in reserve.

"*January 5th.*—My entire command, preceded by Stanley's cavalry, marched into Murfreesboro and took up the position we now hold. The enemy's rear guard of cavalry was overtaken on the Shelbyville and Manchester roads, about five miles from Murfreesboro, and, after sharp skirmishing for two or three hours, was driven from our immediate front. The conduct of my command from the time the army left Nashville to its entry into Murfreesboro

is deserving of the highest praise, both for their patient endurance of the fatigues and discomforts of a five days' battle, and for the manly spirit exhibited by them in the various phases of this memorable contest. I refer you to the detailed reports of the division and brigade commanders, forwarded herewith, for special mention of those officers and men of their commands whose conduct they thought worthy of particular notice."

## CHAPTER VII.

### FORWARD TO CHATTANOOGA.

The Titanic terrain—Terra incognita—Dissolving views—Chattanooga the prize—Evacuated by Bragg, with intention to return—Rosecrans urged to move—The field—Ridges, rivers, and gaps—Topography of Chattanooga—"Hawk's Nest"—Chickamauga Creek—"River of death"—Missionary Ridge—Rosecrans's misjudgment—Occupies Chattanooga and orders pursuit—Bragg waits for him—Thomas ordered to Lafayette—Bragg concentrated there—Attacks Union left—Then right—Table of both armies—Crittenden driven back—McCook scattered.

ALTHOUGH it is only the purpose of this narrative to describe the part taken in the campaigns and battles of the war by the subject of this biography, we are here met by the unmathematical paradox that the part taken by Thomas was not equal to, but in a peculiar sense greater than, the whole. In order to prove this it becomes necessary to present at somewhat greater length an outline sketch of the entire campaign in which it is claimed that he played so important a part.

This is no easy task. Amid the jargon of recriminations, the immense amount of statistics, the rapid transformations and dissolving views of the



march to the battlefield, and of the field itself, the impartial critic finds himself surrounded by difficulties. Eager claimants for eulogistic recognition are on either hand, and before him at every step are well-conceived excuses for failure. In one of his essays on history Carlyle says: "The most gifted man can observe, still more can record, only the series of his own impressions. His observation, therefore, to say nothing of his other imperfections, must be successive, while the things done were often simultaneous. The things done were not a series but a group." This is worthy of notice by military critics. It is true of the movement of large armies, and eminently so of the battle now to be considered. Chickamauga presents such a labyrinth both as to time and space, as to series and groups, that the historian would be irrecoverably lost were it not for the threefold clue of magic thread presented by the skill, valor, and endurance of Thomas, which alone gives system and symmetry to the story. From first to last Thomas was the guiding spirit and splendid hero of the battle.

The campaign of Chattanooga was in all respects the most colossal and difficult of the war. It was the conflict of Titans upon gigantic camping grounds. That there should have been blunders and partial failures is not at all to be wondered at when we consider the immense difficulties of the problem—the vastness of the great theater, its extremely broken

and diversified nature, mountain ranges, narrow gaps, deep valleys, thick forests, rivers and streams in snakelike and bewildering convolutions. All these features were of the nature of obstacles to the Federal advance, and at the same time a defense and protective covering to the Confederate positions. Thus from the outset it was an unequal conflict.

The great objective point for both armies was Chattanooga. It was the purpose of Rosecrans to occupy it permanently, and that of Bragg to return to it after he should have defeated the Union army. We have seen that, as early as the battle of Mill Springs, Thomas had hoped to capture it.

One year later Buell was marching upon it when he was stopped by Bragg at Perryville. The movement upon Chattanooga was again begun when Rosecrans succeeded Buell, and it had been again delayed by reason of the battle of Stone's River. Bragg, as we have seen, had occupied it, and at first sight it seems strange that he should have evacuated the town at the approach of the Union army. It will soon appear, however, that the alternative was forced upon him. He was not well provided with materials and provisions with which to stand a siege. His communications both north and south were endangered by the advance of Rosecrans; and so he left the town temporarily, to give battle to Rosecrans, to defeat him, and to drive him back upon the route of his advance. That being accom-

plished, Bragg would return at once to Chattanooga, lose no time in fortifying and fully supplying the place, secure his communications, especially those with the South, and constitute it an impregnable base of future operations. He came very near accomplishing all this.

It has been already seen that the long stay of Rosecrans at Murfreesboro, only temporarily broken by the campaign of Tullahoma, was so irritating to the authorities at Washington that they sent urgent requests, and at last imperative orders, to Rosecrans to move upon Bragg without any further delay. As we proceed in our inquiries we are the more inclined to consider the Union general wise in his caution and delay. He was pained and perplexed by the ignorant impatience of the authorities at Washington. His correspondence with the War Department, from January to July, discloses the great needs of his army in all kinds of equipments; the necessity of abundant material to be supplied as he advanced along lines of communication which would be taxed to their utmost; and, in addition to this, the deliberate care to put his troops in the best marching and fighting order. Such things can not be properly done in a day. Even genius is powerless to accomplish them.

It is curious to observe the diametrically opposite views taken of the military situation at this juncture. It will be remembered that Grant was besiege-

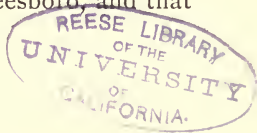
ing Vicksburg, and there certainly was an intimate relation between that siege and the proposed movement from Murfreesboro. To the authorities at Washington it seemed that great promptitude in both cases would be reciprocally important. To Rosecrans it appeared not well "to fight two great battles at the same time." In point of fact, the critic is not disposed to lay great stress upon this controversy. Grant, with his preponderance of numbers, needed nothing from Rosecrans except to keep Bragg in his front; while, without perceiving the significance of Rosecrans's view, he could certainly well afford to wait until he was ready to fight his own battle. The moral effect of the capture of Vicksburg was indeed very great, but materially it had little to do with Rosecrans and his fortunes.

On this question of the long delay at Murfreesboro it should further be said, that while it was natural that the Washington authorities should be anxious for speedy and successful results, the six months consumed by Rosecrans form a very small period in the annals of a great war; and not only the general in command but his immediate subordinates were, prejudice apart, the best judges of the time to move as well as the manner of movement.

"To show," says Rosecrans in a letter to Halleck of June 11, 1863, "how differently things are viewed here, I called on my corps and division commanders and generals of cavalry for answers in writing to

these questions : 1. From your best information, do you think the enemy materially weakened in our front? 2. Do you think this army can advance at this time with reasonable prospect of fighting a great and successful battle? 3. Do you think an advance advisable at this time? To the first, eleven answered No, six Yes, to the extent of ten thousand. To the second, four Yes, with doubts; thirteen No. To the third, not one Yes; seventeen No. Not one thinks an advance advisable until Vicksburg's fate is determined. Admitting these officers to have a reasonable share of military sagacity, courage, and patriotism, you perceive that there are graver and stronger reasons than probably appear at Washington for the attitude of this army. I therefore counsel caution and patience at headquarters. Better wait a little to get all we can ready to insure the best results, if by so doing we, perforce of Providence, observe a great military maxim, not to risk two great and decisive battles at the same time. We might have cause to be thankful for it; at all events, you see that, to expect success, I must have thorough grounds, that when I say 'Forward!' my word will inspire conviction and confidence where both are now wanting."

It is due both to General Rosecrans and to General Thomas to say that the latter is understood to have heartily supported what he considered the necessary delay of that army at Murfreesboro, and that



he was not actuated in his opinion by any desire for personal rest or absence during this period.

Preliminary reconnoissances, as we have seen, had been already made. Palmer's and Wood's divisions of the Twenty-first Corps began the crossing of the Cumberland Mountains on August 16th. By the 1st of September all had crossed; on the 8th of that month his whole army had passed over the Tennessee, and the main body was encamped in Lookout Valley, near the western slope of Lookout Mountain, and it was his apparent intention to move in force upon Bragg's southern communications. As we approach the bloody field of Chickamauga we must cast a comprehensive glance at the ground over which Rosecrans was moving and the field upon which the hostile armies were to meet.

Chattanooga is situated in one of the numerous coil-like bends of the Tennessee River. South and west of it the ground is broken into long ridges, with narrow intervening valleys, running down and abutting against the river. Through these valleys are streams flowing into the river, and through the ridges at long distances apart are precipitous gaps, through which the Union army must pass. The first ridge reckoning from the west is the plateau of Sand Mountain, attaining an elevation of twenty-two hundred feet. Next to that is Will's Valley, merging at the north into Lookout Valley, through which flows Lookout Creek, along the east-

ern side of which is the extended range of Lookout Mountain, running up to the Tennessee River just below Chattanooga. Its top is twenty-four hundred feet high. East of this is a small valley called McLemore's Cove, in which the West Chickamauga takes its rise and flows northward, emptying into the Tennessee about three miles above Chattanooga. A short distance west of Chattanooga is Missionary Ridge, a long narrow elevation, between which and Lookout Mountain the Chattanooga River flows and empties into the Tennessee just below the city.

Northeast of Missionary Ridge is the famous Chickamauga Creek, now about to be the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the war. On the east side of Pigeon Mountain and at the extremity of Pea Vine Ridge is the town of Lafayette, about fifteen miles south of Chattanooga, on the Southern Railroad. It was occupied by the Confederates in force. Lee and Gordon's Mills, on the Chickamauga Creek, about ten miles north of Lafayette, was to play an important part in the battle. Rossville and Rossville Gap are just at the southern end of Missionary Ridge. Among the principal towns on or near the Tennessee which also figure in the campaign are Bridgeport and Stevenson. Through the former a portion of Bragg's army crossed in his retiring movement, as also did a portion of the Union army in its advance. Through the latter

Rosecrans received, at a lengthening distance, his principal supplies from Nashville.

It is interesting to observe that, by a curious coincidence, the Cherokee Indian names of Chattanooga and Chickamauga have an involuntary but romantic connection with the purposes of the contending armies and the bloody history of the campaign. Chattanooga, the great objective point, to hold which both were exerting their utmost powers, means "hawk's nest," and is analogous to the eyrie which gave its name in history to the House of Hapsburg; while Chickamauga means "the river of death." Mission or Missionary Ridge is so called because upon it was a Roman Catholic Mission, with chapel and school, for the Cherokee Indians. As we have already seen, Rosecrans, when he began his movement in the latter days of June, pressing Bragg back to Tullahoma and cutting the railroad at Decherd, had a force of about sixty thousand men, which, however, by constant reinforcements, had increased by September to ninety-two thousand.

The following is a tabulated statement of the composition of his army: I. The Fourteenth Corps, General Thomas, contained four divisions—viz., Baird, Negley, Brannan, J. J. Reynolds. II. The Twentieth Corps, General McCook, three divisions—viz., J. C. Davis, R. W. Johnson, and Sheridan. III. The Twenty-first Corps, General Crittenden,



three divisions—viz., T. J. Wood, Palmer, and Van Cleve. IV. The Reserve Corps, General Gordon Granger, one division—viz., J. B. Steedman. V. The Cavalry Corps, General R. Mitchell and Colonel E. M. McCook.

In the early days of August, Bragg having continued to retreat, Rosecrans slowly followed. The conviction was growing stronger upon him that all he would have to do was to pursue the enemy. It still increased in strength when Bragg, having made feeble resistance at the gaps of Cumberland Mountain, passed through them and crossed the river mainly at Bridgeport. He burned the bridge at that crossing and went into Chattanooga, but he did not remain there long. When he evacuated the town the conviction of Rosecrans became a certainty that Bragg was in full retreat. Then, fearing lest he should escape him, the Union general pushed his troops rapidly forward, and in his attempt to find out Bragg's lines of retreat he extended his army loosely in a long line from left to right, in order that he might not fail to intercept the enemy, whatever might be his line of flight. This was hazardous in the extreme. McCook was separated from Thomas by a distance of forty miles or more on the right, while Crittenden was on the other side twenty miles from the center.\* In order further to deceive Rose-

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\* In point of fact, McCook was completely insulated at Alpine, where he remained until the 11th.

crans into the opinion that he was retreating, Bragg also resorted to various stratagems, not unusual on such occasions. Men were sent into the Union lines with the news that Bragg had left Chattanooga and was beginning a rapid retreat southward, and he also made a few movements in order to strengthen that belief.

Thomas was not for an instant deceived by these. He alone, among the generals of that army, seemed really to divine the nature of the situation, and he pointed out the extreme danger of allowing such intervals between the corps. He even took the responsibility of ordering McCook to close in upon him, and it was not a moment too soon. Bragg, he repeated, was not retreating at all. He was only luring the Union army on to his own chosen ground. He would see their dispersed condition, and attack the separated corps in detail. By taking strong ground south of Chattanooga, he would secure his own communications, put himself in the most advantageous position, cut Rosecrans off from Chattanooga, and there await the re-enforcements, which would give him preponderating strength to strike the Union corps as they were passing through the mountain gaps. It was a well-conceived and well-digested plan, and certainly for a short time General Rosecrans was thoroughly deceived. This delusion of Rosecrans was, however, soon dissipated.

Even then, had he simply occupied Chattanooga

and intrenched his army strongly around it, his campaign, thus far so well conducted, would have been a great success, with no drawbacks. He would have avoided the bloody battle of Chickamauga and been in far better condition than he was after that action. As he awoke from his delusion he drew together with great precipitation the separate corps before Bragg could strike them in detail. With one division of the Twenty-first Corps, which had crossed the river at Battle Creek, he occupied Chattanooga on the morning of the 9th of December. But they did not fortify the town. Leaving only one brigade there to hold it, Crittenden pushed on with the rest of his corps in the furtherance of Rosecrans's plan of pursuit to Ringgold. Here again his eyes began to be opened. The way was strongly barred by the enemy, so Crittenden turned aside toward Lafayette. There also was a lion in the path; so he fell rapidly back to Lee and Gordon's Mill. The military critic may adopt the judgment of Van Horn. Of the condition of things at this time he says: "In view of the manifest practicability of the concentration of the army at Chattanooga, Thomas urged Rosecrans to abandon his scheme of pursuit, to establish his army at that point and perfect communications with Bridgeport and Nashville. Had this been done, the offensive could have been taken from Chattanooga as a base. Thomas was opposed to a movement which would

bring on a battle when the army, having nearly exhausted its supplies transported from Bridgeport, could not follow up a victory in the event of winning one, and where, if defeat should be the issue, the problem of supplies would be difficult of solution." But the counsel of Thomas was set aside. It still appeared to the commanding general that Bragg was moving as rapidly as possible upon Rome, where indeed a few advanced troops were throwing up extensive intrenchments. So, on the 9th of September, Rosecrans ordered a general pursuit by the whole army. To Thomas that day he wrote in the following decided language: "The general commanding has ordered a general pursuit of the enemy by the whole army. . . . He directs you to move your command as rapidly as possible to Lafayette." To the same purpose, General Crittenden, who, as we have seen, had occupied Chattanooga with one brigade, while with the remainder of the Twenty-first Corps he was to follow the enemy rapidly, was embarked in this general pursuit. General McCook with the detachments of the Twentieth Corps was to move toward Rome through Alpine and Summerville, to turn the enemy's flank and cut off his retreat. Thus at the outset the campaign was let and hindered by a first most grievous error.

In endeavoring to carry out his orders, General Thomas moved through Stevens's and Cooper's Gaps,

Negley's division leading through the former into McLemore's Cove, twenty miles south of Chattanooga.

While the Union troops were acting under these mistaken orders, a glance at Bragg's movements will show that, so far from any thought of retreat, he had been quietly taking position on the 7th and 8th of September on a strong line from Lee and Gordon's Mill to Lafayette along the main road leading south from Chattanooga, and fronting the slope of Lookout Mountain. Everything now tended to Bragg's advantage.

The following is a concise table of the Confederate army under General Bragg: I. Polk's corps, two divisions, Cheatham and Hindman. II. D. H. Hill's corps, two divisions, Cleburne and Breckinridge. III. Buckner's corps, two divisions, A. P. Stewart and Preston. IV. Walker's corps, two divisions, Liddell and Gist. V. Longstreet's corps, which arrived later, and just before the battle of the 20th, three divisions, Hood, McLaws, and Bushrod R. Johnson. VI. Wheeler's cavalry corps, two divisions, Wharton and Martin. VII. Forrest's cavalry corps, two divisions, Armstrong and Pegram. In order to give Bragg every available fighting man, the Georgia militia were guarding the depots and bridges.

Bragg was concentrated along this line, was in readiness to strike in any direction, and enthusiastic

at the evident misapprehension of the situation by Rosecrans. It seemed a new illustration of the old fable of "the spider and the fly." His army had at first consisted of the corps of Polk and Hill, which, with the contingents of all kinds, had amounted to fifty-nine thousand men. Re-enforcements, as the above table shows, had been coming in daily under Buckner, Breckinridge, and Johnston. Some of these re-enforcements, it has been asserted, were in violation of military law. They were said to be drawn from Grant's front in large numbers, and many of them had been paroled by him under a promise not to fight until duly exchanged; it is alleged that they were never exchanged, but were sent at once to confront Rosecrans. Thus it seems that the Confederate armies had already begun to feel that want of men which was to lead before long to their final defeat. At last, in the nick of time, just before the battle of the 20th was joined, two divisions under Longstreet arrived from the Army of Virginia. These, added to his main force, gave Bragg on the morning report of the 18th more than ninety thousand men.

The force of Rosecrans which was to try conclusions with this army amounted, as we have seen, to ninety-five thousand men. When Rosecrans ordered the pursuit, Thomas, whose corps then formed the center of the Union army, marched toward Lafayette, and was, as we shall see, the first to engage

the enemy. From that moment the conviction must have grown upon the clear mind of Thomas, as it is certainly apparent to the military reader, that the fortunes of the Union army were in his keeping. In obedience to his orders, he had moved cautiously over Lookout Mountain, through Stevens's and Cooper's Gaps, toward Dug Gap in Pigeon Mountain, about nine miles beyond.

On the night of the 9th of September Bragg ordered a large force to attack Negley in the gap the next morning, and he afterward declared that had the generals carried out his instructions Negley would have been overpowered by numbers. He was probably mistaken, for with his usual sagacity and prudence Thomas had foreseen this possibility, and ordered the divisions of Baird, Reynolds, and Brannan forward to support Negley in order to repel Bragg's projected attack. Strange to say, this excellent caution of Thomas was regarded with impatience by Rosecrans, who had not yet divested himself of the idea that Bragg was in full retreat. Nor did he seem to see that this caution of Thomas was greatly to the advantage of McCook and Crittenden, whose corps were yet at wide distances apart and needed concentration, and were anxiously awaiting orders to that effect. Thus it happened that when Bragg advanced later through Catlett's Gap and Dug Gap to overpower Negley and his supports, Thomas withdrew his force by Bailey's Cross Road

toward Lookout Mountain, where the Fourteenth Corps was concentrated. We repeat that from that time General Thomas seems to the disinterested spectator like a man already anticipating, in dim outline indeed, the great responsibility which was to fall upon him.

He was loyally devoted to the administration of Rosecrans, and could not fail to see in what a masterly manner the campaign had been thus far conducted. He was ready to obey orders, but he already began to notice how mistaken some of those orders were. He saw with anxiety the separation of the corps out of supporting distance. He did not agree with Rosecrans in his opinion that Bragg was about to retreat; and that this was what his temporary evacuation of Chattanooga meant. He saw that the Confederate general was obliged thus to cover his Southern communications and fight a desperate battle; and, holding these opinions while others did not, he felt that the brunt of the attack was to fall upon him, and that if he could not bear it the day was lost. In such a light at least does the entire conduct of Thomas appear to the military critic. Nor does this opinion come after the facts; it was clearly that of Thomas before the battle.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA.

Bragg leaves Thomas to attack Crittenden—Position of troops on the 17th and 18th—Thomas on the left bank of the Chickamauga from Owen's Ford to Gowan—McCook withdraws to the rear—Crittenden on the left center in the rear—Thomas holds the left—Furious attacks on the left, on the right, and on the center—Order of Rosecrans to T. J. Wood makes a gap in the line—Penetrated by Longstreet—The forlorn hope and the Gordian knot—Rosecrans goes to Chattanooga—Final attack—Steedman's division of Granger's corps—Thomas retires in good order—"The Rock of Chickamauga."

WHILE thus the enemy was strongly concentrated opposite our center, the projected pursuit by the right and left wings had not simply come to a standstill, but the conditions were entirely reversed to close up upon Thomas. McCook had thrown his trains backward, and there had been some confusion and countermarching among his troops pending his reception of further orders.

When he found, on receiving the order to join Thomas, that he could not do so by the nearest line, he had sent back his trains to the summit of the mountain; and when he received the repeated order he could only obey it by moving through Valley

Head and ascending the mountain through Henderson's Gap. This detour caused great delay, and it was not until the 17th that the three corps were in supporting distance. It will always cause the military reader to wonder that Bragg in the meantime had not attacked them in detail with superior numbers. That he did not accomplish this was no doubt in part due to the fact that he did not know the military position with great exactness. He was warranted in doubting that such a military blunder had been committed; and when the Union army was most extended the distances were too great for him to strike promptly. On the left, Crittenden had taken position on the Chickamauga on August 12th, at and around Lee and Gordon's Mill. As it was evident the enemy would not retreat, he was ordered to attack and drive them away; this made a temporary change in Bragg's plan. He seems to have determined to postpone his movement against Thomas until he could crush Crittenden. That effectually accomplished, he would again mass his forces against Thomas, drive him back in confusion, and, coming upon the flank of McCook, would send him flying through the air. This programme would perhaps have been carried out successfully had it not been for the want of activity on the part of his subordinates. Bragg was handicapped by some men who were counselors rather than lieutenants. The attack upon Crittenden was confided to

Polk, and was to have been made at dawn on September 13th. The Confederate divisions that were to make it were those of Hindman and Cheatham, supported by the divisions of Walker, with Buckner's divisions in reserve. Cleburne, of Hill's corps, occupied Dug Gap and was watching Thomas. General Bragg's plan was not carried out according to his orders.

We may now pass over the intervening days of preparation and experiment until the evening of September 17th, when the adverse forces were thus posted: Thomas's corps was still on and near the left bank of the Chickamauga River, from Owen's Ford to Gowan, Brannan's division being on the right; then Baird, Negley, and Reynolds. Crittenden's corps was still in front of Lee and Gordon's Mill, comprising the divisions of Palmer, T. J. Wood, and Barnes's brigade of Van Cleve's. McCook's corps, which had retraced its steps from Alpine, had finally taken ground and shape to the right and rear on the slope of Missionary Ridge, covering the roads to Stevens's and Cooper's Gaps.

This campaign, which in its doubtful and tactive movements had consumed more than twenty days from the time when Rosecrans made his first movement to cross the Cumberland Mountain, becomes, as we are on the eve of the great conflict of Chickamauga, so full of detail that space is entirely wanting to describe it fully in these pages. By September

17th the corps of the Union army were fortunately within supporting distance, and then and the next day they were in readiness for the conflict: although up to this time there had been partial conflicts for many days, the real action of the battle of Chickamauga is comprised in two days of hard fighting—September 19th and 20th. The eyes of Rosecrans had now at last been entirely opened to the real purpose of the enemy, and terrible attacks on the Union left and center were further to convince him of his unfortunate mistake.

Another glance at the topography must be taken before the great battle begins. Chickamauga Creek rises near the base of Missionary Ridge, runs in a northeast direction, and enters the Tennessee River about six miles above Chattanooga. The following rapid changes had been made in the Union line: Crittenden was moved to the rear and right, and Thomas was obliqued to the left. Thus the Union army had its right near Lee and Gordon's Mill and its left near the Rossville road. Besides the fierce fighting, a new danger impended. It now became evident that Bragg's purpose was to cut Rosecrans off from Chattanooga, and, to give him greater force with which to do this, Longstreet had, as we have related, just arrived with his troops from Virginia on the night of the 18th, and had taken position at once for the battle of the next day.

That night was a very busy one. There was no

sleep for the Federal army; they worked all night, completing the alignment and throwing up slight intrenchments. This incessant labor was not completed until two hours before day on the 19th. The dreadful note of preparation was heard on every hand. A full moon and a cloudless sky made the entire scene visible. The night was very cold, and the men, instead of gathering wood, warmed themselves by setting the fences on fire where they stood. Thus the entire position was clearly delineated by the blazing fences.

Had General Rosecrans chosen even at that moment to withdraw without a battle, it does seem that he might have entered Chattanooga by the Dry Valley and the Lafayette road and rapidly fortified himself there to stand a siege. He preferred, however, to fight; and, on the whole, we applaud his decision; to have shunned the battle then would have caused the loss of prestige and reputation. Strategy and grand tactics were at an end. Battle tactics and hard pounding were in order. The chances of success were even, the forces about equal. The battlefield presented no advantages of sun and air to either combatant; but the stake was very unequal. If Bragg were defeated, he would retreat to the South, as he eventually did after the battle of Missionary Ridge. If Rosecrans were cut off from Chattanooga and pursued, it would have been very hard to save the Union army from utter ruin; indeed, in

the judgment of the best military critics, it would have been impossible.

*First Day, September 19.*—With the dawn of the 19th both armies were ready for action. The enemy were posted on the right bank of the creek in two wings, commanded respectively by Polk and Longstreet.\* In the front of the right wing were the three divisions of Cleburne, Breckinridge, and Cheatham; and in the left wing Stewart's and Hood's divisions. The furious attack with overwhelming numbers upon Thomas was designed to be made at the break of day, and explicit orders had been sent to Polk to that effect.

Thomas was in ignorance indeed that an overwhelming force was very near him, and might have been surprised had not a strong reconnoissance under Brannan disclosed the enemy and brought on the battle in a more patent way. The attack of the enemy was, however, furious, and at first seemed overpowering; but, although driven back, the Union force soon rallied and by a counter-charge disputed the field; timely re-enforcements were sent by Rosecrans. The purpose of the enemy was for Hood to swing round his right and envelop Crittenden, while Walker should attack in front and join Hood, and then united they would force their way into the gap be-

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\* Some of his troops—three small brigades—participated in the battle of the 19th. Longstreet himself did not arrive until that night; he reported in person to Bragg at 11 o'clock.

tween the latter and Thomas. At the same time D. W. Hill was posted so as to defeat any Union attempt on the left flank of the Confederates ; for while Bragg was intent upon turning the Union left, he was not without concern as to his own left.

When the attack came it was with tremendous force. It was directed against the left of Thomas, who now held the left of the line, for Crittenden had been already moved to the right and rear. Had it been thoroughly successful it would have cut off the last chance of retreat, should that become necessary, into the defenses of Chattanooga. McCook had been withdrawn by order of Rosecrans to form a new line on the right ; and thus disintegrated as corps, brigades of both these corps were sent to the left from time to time to Thomas as he needed them. The furious assault of the enemy had been received by Baird and Brannan on the extreme left. It was also aided by Forrest's cavalry. The Union troops were driven back about a mile and a half, with the loss of several guns. There they rallied, and, forming a new line, awaited a new attack ; but it did not come at that point. This time there was a desperate attempt made upon Thomas's right flank, which had been rapidly re-enforced by divisions from McCook's corps. This, however, was only partially successful, for General Hazen, with admirable forecast, had posted twenty guns on a commanding eminence, which forced the enemy back, with great loss. Af-

ter a slight lull a heavy column of the enemy then advanced upon Thomas's center. There he was less vulnerable, and repulsed the assaulting force without difficulty.

Such, in brief, was the record of the fight on September 19th. The Union troops were slightly retired, and the Confederates still retained the ardor and prestige of attack.\* The next day would decide the difficult question, and it looked doubtful indeed. Thus battered on both flanks and in the center, on the evening of the 19th Thomas fell back slightly and readjusted his line, especially strengthening his left flank, the point of vital importance, which the enemy was determined to overpower, and the defeat of which would cut the army off from Chattanooga. All other assaults were subordinated to this important purpose.

During the night of the 19th there was great activity in both camps. Bragg had readjusted the two wings of his army; † the right, still commanded by Polk, contained the four divisions of Cleburne,

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\* The whole army of Rosecrans, by reason of the nature of the attacks, had been constantly obliquing to the left; and during the night of the 19th the same order of divisions was observed from left to right—viz., Baird, Johnson, Palmer, Reynolds, and Brannan, Baird refusing his left, and Brannan in echelon. Negley, who had been posted on the right of Brannan, was moved to the left of Baird.

† At the last and opportune moment—viz., at midnight on the 19th—Longstreet arrived from Virginia with a strong re-enforcement, and these troops were at once placed in line of battle.



Breckinridge, Cheatham, and Walker. The left, under Longstreet, comprised the six divisions of Stewart, Preston, Johnson, Anderson, Hood, and McLaws. These were disposed in double lines, with a strong cavalry force on the right flank. The new line of Thomas occupied a similarly extended front. From left to right were the divisions of Baird, Palmer, Reynolds, Brannan, Wood, Davis, Sheridan, and Wilder. Gordon Granger had one division of his corps near Rossville. The Union troops worked most industriously all night; ammunition was distributed, intrenchments were made, and trees were cut down to form *abatis* in front. The manifest determination of Bragg to roll up Thomas's left flank made all this activity more than necessary. The furious assaults of yesterday were to be repeated on the morrow.

*Second Day, September 20.*—At early dawn Thomas sent to Rosecrans to request that Negley's division, which had been detached, should be placed in position on his threatened left. It was slow in coming, and by eight o'clock only one brigade—that of Beatty—had arrived. And at early morning, according to Bragg's explicit orders, the divisions of Polk's corps were to make their attack. When before daylight Bragg, who was in the saddle, took a position from which he expected to see the prompt fulfillment of his orders, he was greatly astonished to find no sign of movement. He dispatched a staff officer

to General Polk's headquarters, who had been absent from his advance during the night and who was taking a late breakfast. The adjutant received from him the excuse that the divisions designated to make the attack were partly overlapped by Longstreet's troops and could not move; so the attack was not made until nearly ten o'clock.\* About that time Breckinridge and Cleburne made a fierce assault upon the Union left, Cleburne directly in front, and Breckinridge swinging round to the left, again trying to inclose it. Then began a movement forward and back; the enemy were repulsed; the attacking party was re-enforced; the ground was again lost, but was partially recovered by Stanley's brigade of Negley's division, and Vanderveer's of Brannan's. Breckinridge's left wheel was reversed, and the Union left was temporarily relieved and strongly held by Baird's division. The movements on the field were now rapid and numerous. Baird's division was re-enforced by a brigade of Wood's, and Thomas directed a large number of guns to be placed on Missionary Ridge, to sweep by their fire the intervening ground and prevent the advance of the enemy.

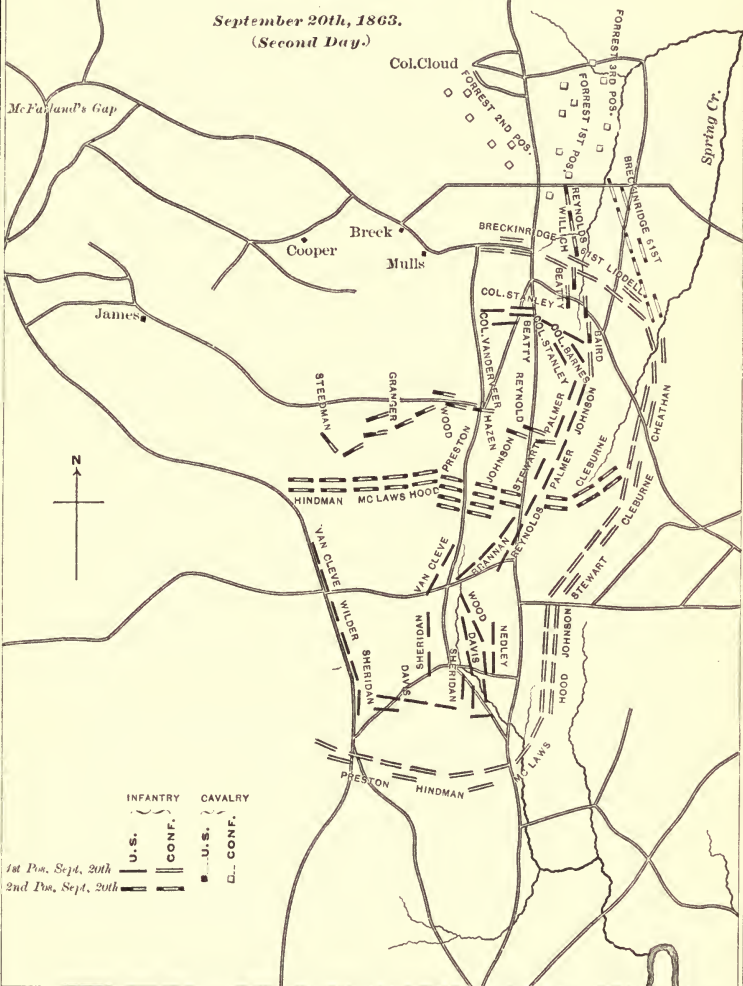
No sooner had these precautions been taken than

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\* Bragg, dissatisfied with this excuse, suspended Polk from his command and preferred charges against him. Upon a point of legal informality Jefferson Davis quashed the charges and restored Polk to his command. This very act invalidated Bragg's authority and robbed him of power.

# Sketch OF THE BATTLEFIELD OF CHICKAMAUGA

September 20th, 1863.  
(Second Day)





a new trouble sprang up on the right. McCook's troops, who had been retired, not anticipating an attack in that direction, and were being moved to the left and center in order to strengthen Thomas. Sheridan's division had been pushed forward from Missionary Ridge. Davis's division, after orders and counter-orders, had marched to take post between the right of Wood and the left of Sheridan. The right of the Union line being thus exposed by detaching these divisions, the enemy took prompt advantage, and sent a force to flank the right and gain Thomas's rear. Thus a new moment of extreme peril was reached. Rosecrans was so impressed with the danger that he sent word to Thomas to refuse his right. This would have changed his order of battle which the situation of the left and center rendered impracticable. He laconically replied that the enemy was pushing him so hard he could make no changes. He was, indeed, fighting a Homeric battle single-handed against great odds. He called for re-enforcements, but the great confusion of the troops in his rear prevented their coming.

Bragg, disregarding all other issues, then threw his whole force against Thomas, feeling almost certain of success. Thus staggering under burdens too heavy to bear, and by no means disposed to relax his heroic efforts, a new misfortune occurred; the gravest of all perils yet encountered came upon him

at this unfortunate moment. It was a mistake for which, as usual, "nobody was to blame." \*

Contrary to the common practice, Rosecrans had

\* With regard to this very serious misapprehension the following is the statement of General Rosecrans :

"Orders were dispatched to General Wood to close up on Reynolds, and word was sent to General Thomas that he should be supported even if it took away the whole corps of Crittenden and McCook.

"General Davis was ordered to close on General Wood, and General McCook was advised of the state of affairs and ordered to close his whole command to the left with all dispatch.

"General Wood, overlooking the direction to close up on Reynolds, supposed he was to support him by withdrawing from the line and passing to the rear of General Brannan, who, it appears, was not out of line, but was in echelon and slightly in rear of Reynolds's right. By this unfortunate mistake a gap was opened in the line of battle, of which the enemy took instant advantage, and, striking Davis in flank and rear as well as in front, threw his whole division in confusion.

"The same attack shattered the right brigade of Wood before it cleared the space. The right of Brannan was thrown back, and two of his batteries, then in movement to a new position, were taken in flank and thrown back through two brigades of Van Cleve, then on the march to the left, throwing his division into confusion, from which it never recovered until it reached Rossville."

This general statement should be accompanied with General Wood's vindication.

After describing his position on the field he says :

"About eleven o'clock A. M. I received the following order :

"'HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND, 10.45 A. M.

"'General WOOD, *Commanding Division* : Close up on General Reynolds as fast as possible and support him.

"'By order of *General ROSECRANS*.

"'(Signed) F. S. BOND, *A. D. C.*'"

"It was delivered by an orderly. The order was not only mandatory, but peremptorily mandatory. It directed me to close

sent by an orderly an order to General T. J. Wood direct, instead of through the corps commander. It was, that Wood's division should close up on Reynolds as rapidly as possible. Let it be observed that the relative positions of these divisions on the line were Reynolds, Brannan, Wood, and Sheridan, Brannan being a little in rear. Wood, construing the order literally, faced his division to the rear and marched past the rear of Brannan to the position of Reynolds, where he was not really wanted and where there was no place for him. The vacant space which he had left formed a gap in the center of Thomas's line. The enemy were not slow in perceiving this. Longstreet's men, Stewart's, Hood's, Kershaw's, and Hindman's divisions poured like a flood into it, and the Union line was cut in two. The situation was now unfortunate in the extreme. The long Confederate line already overlapped the Union line on the right. The left was by no means too secure; the right and rear were endangered,

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upon General Reynolds, a movement of one body from the rear to another body in front of it. But it gave the reason for the movement—viz., to support the body of troops in front—the most important reason that can exist on the field of battle.

“With this order in my hand, with Brannan on my left, with no knowledge of Reynolds's position, but with a peremptory order to close up on him and support him, it was physically impossible to obey in any other way than I did—viz., by withdrawing from the line, passing to the left, finding Reynolds's position, closing up on him, and supporting him.”—*From General Wood's letter to the author.*

and now the center of the line was pierced. What was intended was that, simultaneously with Wood's movement, Davis and Sheridan should close to the left and fill the gap. A fatal delay occurred. Hindman struck Davis in flank and rear and routed him while he was moving to fill the gap. Longstreet's troops followed up this movement. Thomas's right was driven to the rear; his center swung round as upon a pivot. Could his left hold on? That was the vital question. Here was the Gordian knot.

Small congeries of troops gathered, and, led by the bravest men, instead of rushing with the rest to the rear, had come to join Thomas. Among these toward evening was the gallant Sheridan, who appeared at a vital moment with his own division and other scattering troops whom he had rallied around him. Thus, with about twenty thousand men against the entire army of Bragg, General Thomas held the key of the position; everything depended upon him. The rest of the Union army was a disorganized mob flying to Chattanooga. Rosecrans had abandoned the field, and at four on that afternoon had telegraphed to Washington, "My army has been whipped and routed." He should have excepted Thomas, who had not been whipped or routed. Forced into a line of crescent form, his artillery advantageously posted, he repulsed the fierce attacks of Polk on his left and center, and of Longstreet on his right and rear. But unless succor should come speedily it was



indeed a lost field; but the re-enforcements came, not only timely but unexpected.

When the action began, Granger with his troops was not upon the field at all, but was out on the Ringgold road. This makes his action the more meritorious, as in the great confusion of the battle and with the sounds of conflict in several directions, and especially not knowing that Rosecrans had left the field, a man of less decision would have waited for orders, and thus imperiled the fortunes of Thomas as much as his timely appearance succored and supported them. Granger's troops won very deserved distinction on that occasion, and much of it was due to the splendid fighting of Steedman at the Horseshoe Ridge.

The troops of Thomas were disposed in an irregular semicircle, Polk pounding upon his left, Longstreet on his right and rear, holding a strong and commanding ridge on their flank, and apparently there was nothing behind him but disorder and confusion. It was then that General Gordon Granger, like Dessaix at Marengo, after ordering Steedman with two brigades of the reserve division to move at a double quick toward the right, where the firing became louder and louder, galloped to find Thomas in person. Granger was in command, and therefore deserves the credit of the movement; but, before he ordered it, it is due to Steedman to state that he was very anxious to make it himself, and

earnestly begged permission to do so. Earlier in the day Rosecrans had posted him on the Ringgold road, to remain there until further directions. As the firing increased in volume, he had written two notes to Rosecrans asking permission to move. As no answers were received, it was supposed that they had miscarried. He then appealed to Granger, who gladly gave the order and preceded him to the field. Thus a fresh force of seven thousand five hundred men moved rapidly down to the relief of Thomas. As he descried their approach, there was a painful moment of uncertainty, like that of Napoleon at Waterloo, whether he or the enemy was being re-enforced. His line, at that time and just prior to the coming of Granger, was in the following order from left to right: Baird, Johnson, Palmer, Reynolds, Wood, and Brannan. But soon through the clouds of smoke and dust he caught one glimpse of the waving Stars and Stripes.

When Steedman approached, Thomas was standing alone in a clump of trees on Horseshoe Ridge, with the enemy trying to turn both flanks. For a moment he questioned whether he should send him to re-enforce his left, or make head against the masses of Longstreet that were overpowering his right and were already passing to his rear. He did not hesitate long. Pointing to the right, to the commanding ridge held by the enemy, he ejaculated, "Take that ridge!" Steedman moved at once to

the attack, and, in spite of the fierce resistance of the enemy, took the ridge and the gorge, with the loss of twenty-nine hundred men! There was no more desperate fighting during the war. The penetrating wedge was thrown back upon their main line. The gap was filled and the Union rear secured. Thomas completed his contracted line; ammunition, which was running low, was issued to the troops, and this little army, with its heroic leader, constituted that "Rock of Chickamauga," against which both wings of the Confederates had been hurled in unison and thrown back in evaporating spray. When directing the distribution of the remaining ammunition, Thomas issued orders that when that was exhausted they must depend upon the bayonet! All told, the force with which Thomas accomplished this achievement was about twenty-five thousand men. The Confederate columns which attempted to dislodge this force numbered between fifty and sixty thousand.

Obstructed by the mass of troops moving to the rear, Rosecrans did not reach this portion of the field, and was ignorant of the heroic resistance Thomas was making. Securing a safe retreat for his army in Chattanooga, he sent word to Thomas to use his discretion in withdrawing the army. The laconic answer was, "It will ruin the army to withdraw it now; this position must be held till night." He was yet, however, to receive and repel an attack

of the whole Confederate line intended for a *coup de grace*. Receiving a portion of this attack, Thomas found that the time had come to retire. The mode of attack was well chosen, had Thomas remained to receive it fully. Their right was swung round again to envelop his left and to cut off his retreat, while their left was massed against the vulnerable points of the morning. It was now his policy to elude them. Orders were issued at nightfall to withdraw by divisions, Reynolds in front; and yet in front of Reynolds there was danger. A body of the enemy had succeeded in passing through the woods and were now in rear of Reynolds—or rather, in his change of front, they were before him. Aided by Turchin's brigade, which made a splendid charge upon Liddell's division on the extreme right, he scattered this force and made some prisoners.

Then Thomas formed a new temporary line at Rossville to cover his retiring movement, where he was joined by several of the generals who had been driven away or had retreated. By the dim light of a clouded moon he conducted the retreat with great caution and in good order. A strong rear guard alone confronted the enemy, and the attack so furiously begun was abandoned. Longstreet and Forrest were impetuously urgent that Bragg should at once advance the whole army in full pursuit. The former had directed General Wheeler with his cavalry to cut off the retreating force from Chattanooga,

but Bragg ordered a halt and recall. The darkness of the night, he said, and the density of the forest, rendered further movements uncertain and exceedingly dangerous.

What would have been the issue had he moved is indeed a matter of speculation; for, on the other hand, it has been asserted that, had the Union troops been rallied even partially and concentrated with Thomas at the vital point, such was the shattered condition of Bragg's army that it is more than probable a battle on the 21st would have resulted in a Union victory. Among the withdrawals due in part to the terrible onsets of the enemy, to the piercing of the Union line, and other causes incident to the vicissitudes of the battlefield, was that, as we have already seen, of the divisions of Sheridan, Jefferson C. Davis, and Van Cleve. While Thomas held the field and retained his coolness in the midst of all this confusion, he could not understand why, as soon as they were rallied, they did not return to his aid. He sent explicit orders by his aid-de-camp, Colonel Thurston, that they should return across the country from McFarland's Gap, which was only two or two and a half miles, and on which route there was no interposition of rebel force to prevent it. But these troops were in full march toward Rossville, and the order was not obeyed. Circumstances which do not appear on the record may explain what is otherwise inexplicable. We only know that it was

after their arrival at Rossville that an attempt was made to obey the order. They moved by the direct road, and did not reach Thomas until the evening, so that it took all day to march seven or eight miles around two sides of a triangle, when they might have marched two and a half miles in an hour.

I am not disposed to criticise General Sheridan and his associates, who did splendid service on that field, but the fact remains that, could this have been done with the eight or ten thousand men which Sheridan might have gathered and brought up in the nick of time, there would probably have been no occasion for Thomas to have left that battlefield at all, for he would have been able to withstand the final attack and drive the Confederate army away in dire confusion. Such was the clear conviction of General Garfield, Rosecrans's chief of staff, who, instead of going with his leader into Chattanooga, had joined Thomas on the field. Epitomizing the situation at a quarter to nine on September 20th: "On the whole," he says, "General Thomas and General Granger have done the enemy fully as much injury to-day as they have suffered from him, and they have successfully repelled the repeated combined attacks most fiercely made of the whole rebel army, frequently pressing the front and both our flanks at the same time. The rebels have done their best to-day, and I believe we can whip them to-morrow; I believe we can now crown the

whole battle with victory. Granger regards them as thoroughly whipped to-night, and thinks they would not renew the fight were we to remain on the field." Whatever the views of Thomas were, although Rosecrans had virtually turned over the command into his hands, leaving it to his discretion when to withdraw, it would have been manifestly unwise in him to assume the responsibility of a new battle. His first movement was to post what there was of Crittenden's corps intact on Missionary Ridge, near Rossville; McCook's men across the valley, with his cavalry covering the right flank; while his own Fourteenth Corps was placed between the two, from Ringgold Gap to Dry Valley road.

It is worthy of further note, perhaps, that among those who in the disorder of the field had joined Thomas was, as has been already said, General Garfield, whose opinion has just been quoted. He displayed a military spirit and great energy during the whole campaign, and especially in the fighting of the 20th, which formed one of the elements of that popularity which made him President of the United States! As the alternative of fighting the enemy again had been given up, nothing remained but to withdraw the army into the defenses of Chattanooga. While retiring to Rossville, so curiously mingled was the field with Union and Confederate troops that Thomas captured five hundred of their men who had penetrated to the Union rear.

On the night of the 20th and morning of the 21st his guns were posted in large numbers on the low range of hills in his rear. To guard against the advance of the enemy, the Dry Valley pass on the right and the Rossville pass on the left were strongly picketed. The Union army remained thus posted during the 21st, and then by a night march they traversed the four miles to Chattanooga, and on the morning of the 22d they were in at least temporary safety. The men set to work with a will as the rising sun of that day dissipated the ghastly vision of the previous days. Ghastly indeed it was! The Union losses had been more than sixteen thousand, while by his furious onslaughts Bragg had sacrificed eighteen thousand men. Humanity shudders as the imagination conjures up that Aceldama; the contorted forms of dead men and still writhing bodies of the wounded, presenting such an infernal holocaust as few even of Napoleon's battlefields had witnessed! The intrenchments were soon secure against any attacks of the Confederates; the guns were rapidly put into position and opened upon any rash bands of the enemy that appeared in sight. Soldiers soon forget their dangers and sufferings. Their spirits rose as the bands played national airs, and the Stars and Stripes flaunted defiance to the enemy from many flagstaffs.

Bragg's resources were, however, not yet exhausted. He posted his army around Chattanooga, encom-



passing and covering the entire Union position. Holding the Southern railroads, he commanded the northern route to Dalton, and occupied the long line of Missionary Ridge. The tables were turned. Instead of the Union force besieging Bragg in Chattanooga, they were besieged by him, and, as we shall soon see, with a strong chance of compelling them to come out or die of starvation.

We may now pause to take a more philosophic view of this great battle, and thus to place in a clear light the real claims of Thomas to the chief glory and distinction of that field. Technically speaking, the battle of Chickamauga was a Confederate victory, and, as far as the field was concerned, a Union defeat. General Bragg deserves praise for his well-conceived plans and timely orders, although he failed in what would have been a stroke of Napoleonic genius—the destruction of the Union corps in detail while they were separated from each other. That was a golden opportunity lost. The Southern commander was not, however, properly supported by his subordinates. In a military point of view, he deserved to win.

On the other hand, in common language, everything went against Thomas, and yet we have the paradox that every adverse circumstance gave him an opportunity. His counsel was disregarded at the first. His corps was thrust single-handed into the jaws of disaster; the other corps were at first insulated

and afterward disintegrated, and could give him little assistance. By reason of an unfortunate order communicated, not through him, to a subordinate directly, his line was pierced. If at the beginning the armies had been of about equal strength, later, owing to untoward circumstances, he had maintained himself with twenty-five thousand men against the rapidly repeated attacks of more than twice that number. His sublime valor and unequaled endurance received the plaudits of the enemy. "Never," said one of their historians, "did the Yankees fight better than just here." His own men called him thenceforth "The Rock of Chickamauga." He saved the army from flight and utter ruin, for flight would have meant the scattering of the troops, the unrelenting pursuit by Bragg, his occupation of Tennessee and Kentucky, and his seriously threatening the line of the Ohio.

Thus the battle of Chickamauga displays to us this heroic man, towering above his colleagues by his cool and sensible judgment, his tenacity of purpose, and his splendid valor. His skill as a general was tested and proved by his making, as Lannes said to Napoleon, "his plans in the face of the enemy"; changing and modifying them with the numerous and rapid changes of the field; assuming the command and the responsibility with a clear grasp and a forecasting intelligence not surpassed by any general in the history of modern war. And his sol-

diers were worthy of such a general, and were thoroughly infused with his spirit. It must be a glorious and invaluable retrospect to those brave officers and men who are able to say, "I fought with Thomas at Chickamauga."

NOTE.—For an admirable summary of the part played by the artillery in the battle of Chickamauga, the reader is referred to a series of articles contributed by General John C. Tidball to the Journal of the Military Service Institution, particularly in November, 1892, and January, 1893. He considers the experience of that action of great value in changing the system from details of batteries with regiments and brigades to the establishment of an artillery corps, under the command of a chief of artillery, so that batteries might be sent in logical connection to points where they were absolutely needed. He says: "Soon after the action the batteries were taken from infantry brigades; two were allowed to *each division*, while the other seven of each corps were organized into a *brigade* and placed under the direct command of a field officer of artillery. The whole artillery of the army was under the direction of a higher chief. From this on there was an efficient service of artillery in the Army of the Cumberland."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THOMAS AT CHATTANOOGA.

Military Division of the Mississippi—Grant in command—Rosecrans relieved by Thomas—Army of the Cumberland—Hooker's grand division—"I'll hold the town till we starve"—Seventy miles of wagoning—Brown's Ferry—Great achievement of Baldy Smith—Bragg's astonishment—Longstreet detached to Knoxville—Sherman to attack Bragg's left—Hooker's advance by Lookout—Thomas attacks and captures Missionary Ridge—"Without orders"—Confederates routed and pursued.

AFTER the first news at Washington that Rosecrans's army had been "whipped and routed" there arrived the pleasing intelligence that Chattanooga had been occupied and the Army of the Cumberland was safe in its intrenchments. The relief was so great that congratulatory orders were issued. But still later news announced the partial defeat of Rosecrans, and the skill and heroism of Thomas, and so it was decided to make a change in the command. "*The Rock of Chickamauga*" was a taking title not only at headquarters but throughout the country, and it remains in history as his important and honorable cognomen.

The gravity of the situation, however, was by no

means misunderstood. It was considered so great that immediate re-enforcements were sent down from the Army of the Potomac, under General Hooker; and General Grant, our most distinguished commander, the hero of so many fields, was ordered to concentrate a portion of his Western troops, under Sherman, at Chattanooga, and to assume the command there in person.

Hooker's column was extended at first from Nashville to Bridgeport, to secure the communications by that line. He had under him the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps, and they arrived at Bridgeport in detachments from the 2d to the 5th of October. They were joined to the Army of the Cumberland and placed under General Thomas. Sherman was on his way by a rapid movement to Chattanooga.

On the 16th of October an order was issued at Washington making the following changes in command: The departments and armies of the Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee were all united in "the Military Division of Mississippi." General Grant was placed at its head, with his temporary headquarters at Chattanooga. General Burnside, stationed at Knoxville, commanded the Department and Army of the Ohio, General Sherman that of the Tennessee, while General Thomas was placed in command of the Army of the Cumberland, from which Rosecrans had been relieved. Again Thomas protested against the proposed change, but in vain. He was the necessary

man in spite of his reluctance. Chickamauga had made him so.

Rosecrans, in his order announcing his retirement, commends to his troops the known prudence, dauntless courage, and true patriotism of Thomas. While his promotion was an honor most richly deserved, it was a most dangerous one, full of trouble and great responsibility. As early as September 30th the Secretary of War had telegraphed: "The merits of General Thomas and the debt of gratitude the nation owes to his valor and skill are fully appreciated here, and I wish you to tell him so. It is not my fault that he was not in chief command months ago."

A summary of the situation is as follows: It seems now to have been a mistake on the part of the authorities to let Burnside occupy Knoxville. It could not aid, but was destined to embarrass, the more vital operations at Chattanooga. Sherman was coming up as rapidly as possible with the Army of the Tennessee; and Hooker's grand division had arrived at Bridgeport, and was waiting for its assignment to a part in the coming drama. It was manifest that there would be no lack of numbers. The great danger was want of food; every additional man would increase that danger.

On his way to Chattanooga, Grant had stopped at Louisville, and had held a long conference with the Secretary of War, who had gone there to meet him. They discussed the situation; they were more

than satisfied with the strong position of the Union army, with both flanks touching the Tennessee River—or rather, to be more exact, the left resting on Citico Creek and the right on Lookout Mountain, and then on Chattanooga Creek. Although it was encircled by the enemy all the way round from Missionary Ridge to Lookout Mountain, there was little to fear in this regard. It could resist all attacks; it could attack in turn; but the overwhelming difficulty was whence and how to procure supplies, without which both resistance and attack would soon be impossible. The situation was grave in the extreme, and it seemed almost without remedy. They needed provisions and forage, shoes and clothing, ammunition and medical stores, horses and mules. The men were reduced to half rations. The animals were without forage, their very bones seeming to rattle within their drawn hides. The precarious supplies which were received came in by the Anderson road, a very bad one at all seasons, but rendered almost impassable by the autumnal rains. They came across Walden's Ridge, between the Tennessee River and the Sequatchie Valley, from Bridgeport, Ala., the whole distance being seventy miles. The wagon trains were shelled as they passed by detached forces of the enemy, and many of them were captured and destroyed by cavalry raids—Wheeler and Forrest seeming to be ubiquitous in all that region.

More than ten thousand horses and mules had

perished in the long line of wagoning, and Grant spoke with grim humor of the soldiers' daily fare when he called it "half a ration of bread, and beef dried on the hoof." It was with the knowledge of this condition of things that Grant had telegraphed to Thomas from Louisville, on the 19th of October, "to hold Chattanooga at all hazards." The reply of the latter was one of those laconic and epigrammatic sentences which become embalmed in history: "I will hold the town till we starve." At that moment the chances were certainly two to one that they would starve or surrender. There seemed, indeed, to be no other alternative. Without provisions men could not offer battle to the enemy; starving men can not fight. Without provisions they could not retreat; they would faint by the way. Without animals they could not carry away wagons or guns; so, had a retreat been attempted, they would have lost all their guns and munitions, and their cavalry would have failed them. The troops would have been dispersed in every direction, and the enemy, hardly deigning to pursue them, would have attempted a Northern invasion. Indeed, General Grant wrote to Washington that "a retreat would have been almost certain annihilation."

There was great joy in the Confederate councils. Bragg with his strong force saw just such a vision of Federal disaster. He could afford to wait. His cavalry swarmed upon the Federal communications; he had plenty of supplies himself; Thomas could not



get them, and must soon surrender; surely Bragg's star, which had seemed to be sinking below the horizon, was again rising to the ascendant.

The chief movements during the siege and in the battles which put an end to it are quite boldly defined, and were made in such a logical order that there was a clear consecution from first to last; but the details were so numerous and shifting that they must be greatly condensed to come within the scope of this work, and many gallant men and heroic bodies of troops must pass with not even a mere mention. Under Grant and Thomas, regiments and brigades were moved in many directions without regard to their arrangement in corps or even divisions. It must therefore serve our purpose to specify the corps and their commanders, calling attention in the narrative principally to such divisions and brigades as played the most prominent part in the struggle about to begin.

*The Brown's Ferry Affair.*—Of one operation we must, however, pause to take special notice. The question of supplies was of course paramount in the mind of Thomas, even before the arrival of Grant, and he was very fortunate in having as his chief engineer an officer fertile in resources, of large experience, and prompt and skillful in execution. What is known as the Brown's Ferry affair, which is now to be briefly described, was suggested to Thomas and discussed with him by General William F. Smith, of the United

States Engineers. As soon as General Grant arrived the plan was proposed to him, and he gave his assent to it. The peculiar topographical features of the situation were the chief factors in the problem. Where the Tennessee River makes a loop just opposite Chattanooga, running southward and then turning northward again, the intervening ground being known as Moccasin Point, Brown's Ferry is situated—six miles distant by the circuitous water route, but less than a mile across Moccasin Point. The object in view, or rather the plan proposed, was that General Smith should embark with a small force in advance of eighteen hundred men on the pontoon boats, which he did on the night of October 27th. This force was under General William B. Hazen. They floated down the river in complete silence, and were landed at two points near Brown's Ferry. About twenty-two hundred additional men were marched across the bend of the river to re-enforce this first party, and were ferried over in the pontoons at daylight. In the meantime the first expeditionary force had seized the hills to the west, at the mouth of Lookout Valley, to the great surprise of the enemy, who had only placed there a small force, little suspecting an attack at that point. Their pickets were easily overpowered, and the spurs of the hills were occupied by our troops. The four thousand men who accomplished this work were Hazen's brigade of Sheridan's division, Fourth Corps, and Turchin's brigade of Baird's division of

the Fourth Corps. The entire force and the expedition were commanded by General Smith.

The effect was instantaneous. The enemy's detachment, finding itself in danger of being cut off, retreated precipitately, leaving the Ferry in the hands of the Union troops. This was a great point gained. The way was now thrown open to the advance of Hooker and Palmer, but what was of far greater importance was the immense shortening of the line by which the Union army received its supplies. The river was opened between Bridgeport and Brown's Ferry, and there were two fine roads—one from Bridgeport to Brown's Ferry, and the other from Brown's Ferry to Kelly's. By means of the former road the distance was shortened to twenty-eight miles, and when supplies were taken up the river on boats from Bridgeport to Brown's Ferry there were but eight miles of wagoning as against the seventy miles of the day before. And this grand feat was the sudden and splendid harbinger of Union success soon to follow. Two steamers—one captured from the enemy and one recently built—were put into immediate requisition; others also were very soon employed, and all necessary provisions were brought to the troops around Chattanooga. Thomas recognized the value of this achievement in a subsequent report, in which he says: "To Brigadier-General William F. Smith should be accorded great praise, for the ingenuity which conceived and the ability which

executed the movement at Brown's Ferry." General Grant's recognition of its value is found in the fact that he at once recommended General Smith to be made a major general. Charles A. Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, who was there at the time, says, in a dispatch of October 28th, "The great success is General Smith's operation at the mouth of Lookout Valley."

The astonishment and chagrin of Bragg are indescribable. Up to that very moment he had seen for the Union army only the alternatives of starvation or retreat; his certain hope was destroyed at a single blow. There never was a finer transformation scene in a war drama. The following order will show the change in the situation at a glance:

"CHATTANOOGA, *November 1, 1863.*

"COLONEL MACKAY: The Paint Rock will leave Bridgeport this day at 12 M., laden with rations and forage. Send down an order for her to land at Kelly's Ferry, else she will come up to Brown's Ferry, where there are no conveniences for unloading. Give orders also that the boats will continue to stop at Kelly's Ferry until further orders. Thirty-nine thousand rations of forage are at Kelly's Ferry now. Get up a due proportion of subsistence and forage as rapidly as possible, also clothing for the men.

"Respectfully,

"(Signed)                      GEORGE H. THOMAS,

"*Major General, U. S. Volunteers, Commanding.*"

And now the siege was soon to give way to the battle.

The Army of the Cumberland under General Thomas comprised the Fourth and Fourteenth Corps, commanded respectively by Generals Gordon Granger, and Palmer. The Eleventh and Twelfth, constituting the force brought by Hooker, were for the time united to the Army of the Cumberland, and entirely under the control of General Thomas. The Eleventh was commanded by General Slocum, and the Twelfth by General Howard.

General Sherman did not arrive until November 14th, and his troops were just behind him. As soon as he took a comprehensive view of the situation from Fort Wood, and saw the tents of the beleaguering force, he said, "General Grant, you are besieged"; and the answer was, "It is too true." But we are anticipating.

Grant had arrived at Chattanooga on October 23d. His first plan, before the arrival of Sherman, was disclosed in an order issued on November 7th. By it Thomas was directed to attack the enemy on the north end of Missionary Ridge. It was hoped that he might roll back their line on the right, and that also Bragg would be compelled to recall Longstreet's force, which, it was reported, had gone to besiege Burnside at Knoxville. At Thomas's instance the order was, however, countermanded until the arrival of Sherman. As soon as he came the

three generals rode to the nearest point of observation, and Grant asked Sherman whether he thought he could make the proposed attack with success. This required the laying of the new pontoon bridge, and the attack on Bragg's right flank where Missionary Ridge abuts on Chickamauga Creek near the tunnel. He answered in the affirmative, and thus one part of the battle plan was settled in advance. It was hoped by this movement not only to thrust Bragg's right flank back by direct attack, but also, by seriously threatening his communications, to oblige him to fall back in order to secure them. It was also arranged in a general way that Thomas should support him not only by attacking in front, but also obliquely to the left, touching Sherman's right. This movement, however, was to take more decided shape a little later. We may anticipate by saying that Hooker was to come upon Bragg's left flank, and so to threaten it as to keep it in place, and not allow re-enforcements to be sent to the enemy's right. The way being now open, Thomas had ordered Hooker to cross the Tennessee at Bridgeport, which he had done, and Palmer, who was posted opposite Whitesides, had followed Hooker.

When Grant assumed the command, on October 23d, as for a time Thomas becomes a subordinate officer under Grant's orders, only enough need be said of the remainder of the campaign to assign to

Thomas his proper share of the duty and the glory, and to show that his troops were admirably handled, and were eminently successful. Doubtless in the life of Grant, of this series, and in those of Hooker and Sherman, Chattanooga will receive careful attention.

While Bragg was thoroughly disconcerted by the ingenious skill of the Union commanders, and was in doubt what new step to take, he found he had committed a great error in complying with Longstreet's suggestion to detach his corps and direct it upon Knoxville, there to attack Burnside. It may be here premised that this did not so weaken Bragg's center as to warrant his feeble resistance against the coming attack. It was, however, with a knowledge of this detachment that Grant conceived his plan of a triple movement—Sherman on the left, Hooker to come up on the right, and Thomas in the center, to make a direct attack upon Missionary Ridge, thus simultaneously assaulting both flanks and the center of Bragg. With regard to Burnside, who had been clamoring for succor at Knoxville, Grant was not foolish enough to imitate Bragg and weaken his force, but Burnside was ordered to hold out at all hazards, partly on account of the importance of the place, but also to keep Longstreet there and away from Bragg's army. Whatever the physical effect may have been, the moral effect of detaching Longstreet was obvious.

To carry out the plan thus prepared, Sherman,

who after varied adventures had marched from Bridgeport by way of Whitesides and crossed the river at Brown's Ferry, had by daylight of the 24th eight thousand men on the south side of the river. The rest of his command, crossing upon the pontoon bridge, was in position that day near the northern end of Missionary Ridge, on a detached hill. It appears that at first this was to be the main attack, and Thomas had sent all of Howard's force to join Sherman in the operations of the next day, November 25th. They were not, however, needed. It will be readily understood that in making this triple movement, the parts of which were in such close relation to each other, troops were frequently and rapidly moved from one position to another as they seemed to be needed, each attack depending for its *raison a'être* upon the other two. Thus it was that troops were shifted from center to flank and back again, as the exigencies of the conflict seemed to require.

The historians have divided the operations at Chattanooga into two parts; the first they call "The Siege," and the second "The Battle." At this point all was in readiness to end the siege with a battle.

On the same day (November 24th) Thomas ordered Hooker to put his corps in motion, to carry the Confederate intrenchments on the nose of Look-out Mountain, to cross the Chattanooga Creek, and, passing through Rossville, to attack the left of the



enemy's line on the southern end of Missionary Ridge. The troops thus forming the right wing in the combined attack consisted of Geary's division of the Twelfth Corps, a part of the Fourth Corps, and Osterhaus's division of the Fifteenth, which had been detached from Sherman.

The attacks on the flanks being thus provided for, Thomas was to make the central movement with his own Army of the Cumberland. At a given signal they were to move forward upon the enemy's rifle pits at the foot of Missionary Ridge. They were thus arranged from left to right by divisions—Baird, T. J. Wood, Sheridan, and R. W. Johnson. The line was not quite regular, Wood's division being at first a little in front.

A preliminary reconnoissance had been made by General Thomas on Monday, November 23d. Just outside of Chattanooga and less than midway between it and the Confederate rifle pits, being a part of the main fortifications of the city, was an earth-work called Fort Wood. Midway between that and Missionary Ridge, less than a mile from Fort Wood, was a prominent double hill called Orchard Knob.

Grant, with Thomas and other generals, stood upon the ramparts of Fort Wood superintending the first act in the bloody, but splendid, drama about to be enacted. Wood's division was moved rapidly forward to occupy Orchard Knob, and was followed in support by Sheridan's division and those of Baird

and Johnson, constituting Palmer's corps. This point was handsomely carried, a prominent advanced position was thus gained, and an excellent diversion was made in favor of Sherman's coming attack on the enemy's right. During the night a heavy battery was posted on Orchard Knob.

General Bragg, who had remained in a condition of great incertitude, was resolved now to put on a mask of boldness to conceal his misgivings. Even while the preparations to attack him were nearly complete, he sent a letter to General Grant stating that, as there might be some noncombatants in Chattanooga, he deemed it proper to notify Grant that prudence would dictate their early withdrawal. Grant had thanked him grimly for his consideration, but had declined to profit by it. If this was not part of the game of bluff and brag, the immediately following days must have opened his eyes to the fact that the prey of which he had felt so certain was not simply slipping away from his grasp, but would have the temerity to attack him in his intrenchments, while the noncombatants would abet and applaud.

He was not long left in doubt; all was now ready at every point. The position of the Confederate troops along the ridge was as follows: Hardee held their right opposite to Sherman with five divisions, and Breckinridge was on their left with four. Although Sherman's attack had been originally intended as the main one, it evidently was not deliv-

ered in such a manner as to carry out this idea, and it now became manifest that it would be subordinate to Thomas's movement from the center. Most of the troops which had been sent him by Thomas were not employed at all. Portions of two brigades only were seriously engaged. Few if any troops were detached from the Confederate center to resist him. It was not known until afterward that the great bulk of the enemy was in Thomas's front. Thus matters were merging to a crisis.

All that was waited for was the appearance of Hooker on the right. His troops were shut out from the view of the army on the plain by a dense mist, which had settled low upon the crest and sides of Lookout Mountain. Thomas could only guess how the fight was going, and was in suspense as to the result, until a stiff breeze springing up tore asunder the cloudy curtain and disclosed, as if in a colossal amphitheater, looking upward, his triumphant march against and over the Confederate intrenchments. This was the famous "battle above the clouds," which really presented one of the most picturesque features of that famous field. It should be added that some impulsive and enthusiastic volunteers, with a happy instinct but without orders, climbed to the top of the mountain and there unfurled the American flag. This was at daylight on the 25th. Thus the announcement was made that Lookout Mountain was in Union hands. On the morning of

the same day Hooker moved to carry out the programme. Leaving a small force on the nose of Lookout Mountain, he marched into the valley of the Chattanooga River. He was momentarily appalled to find that the bridge across the river had been broken; but his men worked like bees to repair it, and the Twenty-seventh Missouri ran across on the stringers, as soon as they were laid, without waiting for the flooring. Hooker then moved by Rossville Gap up to the crest of Missionary Ridge. We may anticipate by saying that his attack upon his enemy's left flank chimed in successfully with the other parts of the great programme.

To return to Thomas. His immediate command was realizing Shakespeare's description of the English troops: They stood

“Like greyhounds in the slips, straining upon the start.”

It was manifest that when the word should be given their impetuosity would know no bounds. At last the signal came; at twenty minutes to four o'clock six guns were fired as if in a complimentary salute. The brazen note of number six had scarcely sounded when the whole field was alive with motion. There was no more fiery charge in the annals of the war. The Union guns from Orchard Knob were trained over the heads of the attacking party upon the crest of Missionary Ridge. The assaulting column on the front line, when the signal for the assault was given

and all moving simultaneously at the firing of the sixth gun, was arranged with Wood and Sheridan in the center and Baird and Johnson on the flanks. The enemy's rifle pits at the foot of the ridge were handsomely charged and easily captured.

That was as far as Grant intended they should go, but it is difficult to see why. They could not stay there; the simplest instinct prompted them either to retreat or advance. They had no orders to go beyond, but they were in no condition to wait for orders. They only halted long enough to readjust their lines, and were about to breast the terrible storm when there was a conflict of judgment. Some one, it is said, shouted at the top of his voice, "Take the ridge if you can"; but whether there was such a voice or not is very little matter. It certainly was not an official voice. To the astonishment of the commander in chief, they rushed up the slope at a double quick. Singularly enough, the divisions were formed in wedge-like shapes, with the colors in the angle of each. The guns from Orchard Knob swept the crest almost until the attacking column was upon it. Fortunately much of the enemy's fire was too high to do great damage. The Union color-bearers appeared to be running a race each in order to be the first to plant the Stars and Stripes upon the enemy's works. The palm in this contest has never been awarded. In point of fact, the enemy's line was struck at six points and very nearly at the same time.

General Grant's anxiety at this movement without orders was quickly set at rest by the magnificent result, and he thus summarily disposes of the controversy in his official report :

"These troops moved forward and drove the enemy from the rifle pits at the base of the ridge like bees from a hive ; stopped for a moment until the whole were in line, and commenced the ascent of the mountain from right to left, almost simultaneously following closely the retreating enemy without further orders." This does not state the case with sufficient clearness or with justice to the men. Van Horne describes it very pithily and more correctly : "The situation," he says, "offered them the opportunity to stand still and die, to go forward without orders, to stop the destructive fire to which they were exposed, or to retreat on the same condition to avoid it. The men in the ranks and their immediate commanders chose to go forward, and they speedily executed one of the most brilliant assaults known to martial history" (*Life of Thomas*, p. 192).

The scene must have formed one of the most remarkable pictures in battle history—the grand natural features, the splendid confusion of the battle in sights and sounds, the panorama gilded by the slanting rays of the autumnal sun as he sank below the western horizon and carried the tidings into other lands ! The enemy's guns were turned upon them as they fled down the mountain-side. Many of

their regiments threw down their arms. Night put an end to the fighting, but the victory was complete. By twelve o'clock all the Confederate positions around Chattanooga were abandoned, and their disheartened army was in rapid motion to Ringgold and thence to Dalton. It was, up to that time, the greatest and most complete victory of the war.

The most advanced Union troops were scarcely on the crest of the ridge before Grant and Thomas were there in person. The latter did not chide them for their splendid disobedience of orders. He rode along their lines amid tumultuous cheering, and his biographer discloses a bit of grim humor in his address to one of the regiments. He told them they had made a fine race up the hill. One of the soldiers, who was as gaunt as a trained runner by reason of want of food for weeks before, cried out, "Yes, general, you have been training us for this race."

Just then a steamer could be plainly seen upon the river, in the distance, under full head of steam, and Thomas, pointing to it, answered: "That is so; but there come full rations, and in future the Army of the Cumberland shall have plenty to eat."

In the meantime Burnside was sorely beleaguered at Knoxville, and, fearing he could not hold out, was clamoring for support. The great success at Chattanooga enabled Grant to send Sherman to his relief, and thus to complete the bisection of the Confederate line between the North and the South.

The immediate pursuit of the enemy by Thomas was chiefly with Hooker's corps, as far as Ringgold; but it was determined then to withdraw the troops to Chattanooga and set about careful preparation for the future campaign. Military men will know how much there was to be done before the army which had been engaged at Chattanooga could be supplied, recruited, and rested, to be ready to move down upon the enemy.

In order fairly to estimate the high character of the services of Thomas in this eventful campaign, the siege and battle of Chattanooga are not to be considered as separated from the actions out of which they sprang. His work must be regarded as a whole, however, made up of brilliant parts, from the beginning of Rosecrans's movement to the field of Chickamauga down to the rout of the enemy on Missionary Ridge. Without for a moment intending to depreciate the merit of Grant at Chattanooga, without underestimating the value of the additional force which he ordered there, and certainly without undervaluing the brilliant services of subordinate commanders, it must be asserted that the fame of Thomas, already established at Chickamauga, shines out with added luster as the hero of the entire campaign. It has been seen that the army would have been lost but for him at Chickamauga. A less heroic commander than he would have abandoned Chattanooga as the alternative of starvation; one with less



clearness of head and forecast would have lost that confidence in himself which made him sure in advance that he would win.

On March 12, 1864, Sherman was promoted to the command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, Grant having been created lieutenant general and called to Washington. Thomas retained his position as chief of the Army of the Cumberland, and the command of the Army of the Tennessee was given to General James B. McPherson, a rising young officer of the greatest promise.

The strained relations of Bragg with many of his generals, his barren victory at Chickamauga, and his entire defeat at Chattanooga, had caused him to be relieved from the command of the Confederate army. It was conferred upon General Joseph E. Johnston, one of the finest soldiers the United States army had produced, and already greatly distinguished in the Confederate ranks. It must be allowed that he had a Herculean task before him in the regeneration of an army so thoroughly beaten, if not demoralized, as that of Bragg's, and in the potent fact that he was to fight with large odds against him.

In the Southern movements which were soon to follow, Thomas was to play a subordinate part as long as he was under Sherman's command. We shall see that his conduct was marked always by exact obedience of orders, frequently by more than

a subordinate's aid to the commanding general, and often also by flashes of striking skill in movement and in battle.

Officers of distinction who served with Sherman and Thomas at this time described the great difference and entire contrast between these two distinguished men. The former was impetuous in action and excited in manner, while the latter was always dignified, quiet, and equable, regarding even sudden and great emergencies with a coolness that was apparently apathetic, and yet rising slowly but fully to the "height of the great argument." Sherman called him his *wheel horse*, by which he meant his strong reliance in case of emergency. When the great car of battle was either in danger of being stalled on the uphill road, or, as was oftener the case, when it required the strong hold-back on the down hill, it was Thomas who did both.

There was a nickname by which he was known at that time, which, however, had an earlier origin and had followed him in his army career. When he was instructor of cavalry and artillery at West Point, the cadets, who were hard riders, and the horses, which understood the drill just as well as the cadets, wanted to gallop and charge; so when the command to trot was given they expected it to be followed by that to gallop. Then the deep and sonorous voice of Thomas would check their ardor with the order "Slow trot!" So he was called, at

West Point, "Old Slow Trot," and the name followed him through the civil war.

Still another endearing name was given to him. His pride in his command, his paternal care of his soldiers, and a somewhat grave and fatherly air, caused them to call him "Pap Thomas"—a name which, connected with the command of men, speaks volumes. It is echoed to-day by the survivors of his army whenever they meet on festal occasion, and recall with pride and sadness their beloved old commander.

General Sherman, after the victory of Chattanooga, advanced, as has been said, without a moment's delay with the Army of the Tennessee to the relief of Burnside at Knoxville. He drove Longstreet's corps away from its front, and then proceeded to Memphis and Vicksburg. With a large force of twenty thousand men he was engaged at and around Meridian in breaking up the railroads which supplied the enemy. Thence, without rest, he repaired to Nashville to organize a force of a hundred thousand men with which to return and make the famous Atlanta campaign. His conduct deserves unqualified praise.

Thomas, with the Army of the Cumberland, was to accompany him as far as Atlanta, and to take a prominent part in the curious strategy and numerous and bloody battles of the campaign. As the details of this movement upon Atlanta will be found in a

corresponding life of General Sherman, only so much of it need be repeated here as refers to the actions of Thomas and the movements of his army. And yet, as will be seen from our short sketch, the skill, valor, and constancy of Thomas were never more severely taxed than in that memorable campaign.

For the benefit of those readers who desire a more detailed account, in Thomas's own words, we append the following :

*Extracts from General Thomas's Report of Chickamauga.*

"September 18th.—At 4 P. M. the whole corps moved to the left along Chickamauga Creek to Crawfish Springs. On arriving at that place, received orders to move on the crossroad leading by Widow Glenn's house to the Chattanooga and Lafayette road, connecting with Crittenden on my right at Gordon's Mill. The head of the column reached Kelley's farm about daylight on the 19th, Baird's division in front, and took up a position at the forks of the road facing toward Reid's and Alexander's bridges over the Chickamauga. Colonel Wilder, commanding the mounted brigade of Reynolds's division, informed me that the enemy had crossed the Chickamauga in force at those two bridges the evening before and driven his brigade across the State road, at Chattanooga and Lafayette road, to the heights east of the Widow Glenn's house. Kelley's house is situated in an opening about three fourths of a mile long and one fourth of a mile wide, on the east side of the State road, and stretches along that road in a northerly direction, with a small field of perhaps

twenty acres on the west side of the road, directly opposite the house. From thence to the Chickamauga the surface of the country is undulating, and covered with original forest timber interspersed with undergrowth, in many places so dense that it is difficult to see fifty paces ahead. There is a cleared field near Jay's Mill, and cleared land in the vicinity of Reid's and Alexander's bridges. A narrow field commences at a point about a fourth of a mile south of Kelley's house, on the east side of the State road, and extends perhaps for a mile along the road toward Gordon's Mill. Between the State road and the foot of Missionary Ridge there is a skirt of timber stretching from the vicinity of Widow Glenn's house, south of the forks of the road, to McDaniel's house, three fourths of a mile north of Kelley's. The eastern slope of Missionary Ridge between Glenn's and McDaniel's is cleared and mostly under cultivation. The position of Baird's threw my right in close proximity to Wilder's brigade; the interval I intended to fill up with the two remaining brigades of Reynolds's division on their arrival. General Brannan, closely following Baird's division, was placed in position on his left, on the two roads leading from the State road to Reid's and Alexander's bridges. Colonel Dan McCook, commanding a brigade of the reserve corps, met me at General Baird's headquarters and reported to me that he had been stationed the previous night on the road leading to Reid's bridge, and that he could discover no force of the enemy except one brigade which had crossed to the west side of Chickamauga at Reid's bridge the day before; and he believed it could be cut off, because after he had crossed he had destroyed the bridge, the enemy hav-

ing retired toward Alexander's bridge. Upon this information I directed General Brannan to post a brigade within supporting distance of Baird on the road to Alexander's bridge, and with his other two brigades to reconnoiter the road leading to Reid's bridge to see if he could locate the brigade reported by Colonel McCook, and, if a favorable opportunity occurred, to capture it. His dispositions were made according to instructions by 9 A. M. General Baird was nearly in line with Brannan, but to watch well on his right flank. Soon after this disposition of these two divisions a portion of Palmer's division, of Crittenden's corps, took position to the right of General Baird's division. About ten o'clock Croxton's brigade, of Brannan's division, posted on the road leading to Alexander's bridge, became engaged with the enemy, and I rode forward to his position to ascertain the character of the attack. Colonel Croxton reported to me that he had driven the enemy nearly half a mile, but that he was then meeting with obstinate resistance. I then rode back to Baird's position and directed him to advance to Croxton's support, which he did with his whole division, Starkweather's brigade in reserve, and drove the enemy steadily before him for some distance, taking many prisoners. Croxton's brigade, which had been heavily engaged for over an hour with greatly superior numbers of the enemy and being nearly exhausted of ammunition, was then moved to the rear to enable the men to fill up their boxes; and Baird and Brannan, having united their forces, drove the enemy from their immediate front. General Baird then halted for the purpose of readjusting his line, and learning from prisoners that the enemy were in heavy

force on his immediate right, he threw back his right wing in order to be ready for an attack from that quarter. Before his dispositions could be completed the enemy in overwhelming numbers furiously assaulted Scribner's and King's brigades and drove them in disorder. Fortunately, at this time Johnson's division, of McCook's corps, and Reynolds's division, of my corps, arrived and were immediately placed in position; Johnson preceding Reynolds, his left connecting with Baird's right, and Palmer being immediately on Johnson's right, Reynolds was placed on the right of Palmer, with one brigade of his division in reserve. As soon as formed, they advanced upon the enemy, attacking him in flank and driving him in great confusion for a mile and a half, while Brannan's troops met them in front as they were pursuing Baird's retiring brigades, driving the head of his column back and retaking the artillery which had been temporarily lost by Baird's brigades, the Ninth Ohio recovering Battery H, Fifth United States Artillery, at the point of the bayonet. The enemy, at this time being hardly pressed by Johnson, Palmer, and Reynolds in flank, fell back in confusion upon his reserves, posted in a strong position on the west side of Chickamauga Creek, between Reid's and Alexander's bridges. Brannan and Baird were then ordered to reorganize their commands and take position on commanding ground on the road from McDaniel's to Reid's bridge, and hold it to the last extremity, as I expected the next effort of the enemy would be to gain that road and our rear. This was about 2 P. M. After a lull of about one hour a furious attack was made upon Reynolds's right, and he having called upon me for re-enforce-

ments, I directed Brannan's division to move to his support, leaving King's brigade, of Baird's division, to hold the position at which Baird and Brannan had been posted, the balance of Baird's division closing up to the right of Johnson's division. It will be seen by General Reynolds's report that Croxton's brigade, of Brannan's division, reached his right just in time to defeat the enemy's effort to turn Reynolds's right and rear. About 5 P. M., my lines being at that time very much extended pursuing the enemy, I determined to concentrate them on more commanding ground, as I felt confident that we should have a renewal of the battle the next morning. I rode forward to General Johnson's position and designated to him where to place his division; also to General Baird, who was present with Johnson. I then rode back to the crossroads to locate Palmer and Reynolds on Johnson's right, and on the crest of the ridge, about five hundred yards east of the State road. Soon after, Palmer and Reynolds got their positions; and while Brannan was getting his, on the ridge to the west of the State road, near Dyer's house, to the rear and right of Reynolds, where I had ordered him as a reserve, the enemy assaulted first Johnson and then Baird in a most furious manner, producing some confusion; but order was soon restored and the enemy repulsed in fine style, after which these two divisions took up the positions assigned to them for the night. Before adjusting the line satisfactorily I received an order to report to department headquarters immediately, and was absent from my command until near midnight. After my return from department headquarters, and about 2 A. M. on the 20th, I received a report from Gen-



eral Baird that the left of his division did not rest on the Reid's bridge road, as I had intended, and that he could not reach it without weakening his line too much. I immediately addressed a note to the general commanding, requesting that General Negley be sent me to take position on General Baird's left and rear, and thus secure our left from assault. During the night the troops threw up temporary breastworks of logs and prepared for the encounter which all anticipated would come off the next day. Although informed by note from General Rosecrans's headquarters that Negley's division would be sent immediately to take post on my left, it had not arrived at 7 A. M. on the 20th, and I sent Captain Willard, of my staff, to General Negley to urge him forward as rapidly as possible, and to point out his position to him. General Negley, in his official report, mentions that he received this order through Captain Willard at 8 A. M. on the 20th, and that he immediately commenced withdrawing his division for that purpose, when the enemy was reported to be massing a heavy force in his front, sharply engaging his skirmishers, and that he was directed by General Rosecrans to hold his position until relieved by some other command. General Beatty's brigade, however, was sent under guidance of Captain Willard, who took it to its position, and it went into action immediately. The enemy at that time commenced a furious assault on Baird's left, and partially succeeded in gaining his rear. Beatty, meeting with superior numbers, was compelled to fall back until relieved by the fire of several regiments of Palmer's reserve, which I had ordered to the support of the left, being placed in position by

General Baird, and which regiments, with the co-operation of Van Deveer's brigade, of Brannan's division, and a portion of Stanley's brigade, of Negley's division, drove the enemy entirely from Baird's left and rear. General Baird being still hardly pressed in front, I ordered General Wood, who had just reported to me in person, to send one of the brigades of his division to General Baird. He replied that his division had been ordered by General Rosecrans to support Reynolds's right, but that if I would take the responsibility of changing his orders he would cheerfully obey them, and sent Barnes's brigades, the head of which had just reached my position. General Wood then left me to rejoin the remainder of his division, which was still coming up. To prevent a repetition of this attack on the part of the enemy, I directed Captain Gaw, chief topographical officer of my staff, to go to the commanding officer of the troops on the left and rear of Baird's and direct him to mass as much artillery on the slopes of Missionary Ridge west of the State road as he could conveniently spare from his lines, supported strongly by infantry, so as to sweep the ground to the left and rear of Baird's position. This order General Negley in his official report mentions having received through Captain Gaw, but, from his description of the position he assumed, he must have misunderstood my order, and, instead of massing the artillery near Baird's left, it was posted on the right of Brannan's division, nearly in rear of Reynolds's right. At the time the assault just described was made on Baird the enemy attacked Johnson, Palmer, and Reynolds with equal fierceness, which was continued at least two hours, making assault after assault with fresh

troops, which were met by our troops with a most determined coolness and deliberation. The enemy having exhausted his utmost energies to dislodge us, he apparently fell back entirely from our front, and we were not disturbed again until near night, after the withdrawal of the troops to Rossville had commenced. Just before the repulse of the enemy on our left General Beatty came to me for fresh troops in person, stating that most of those I had sent to him had gone back to the rear and right, and he was anxious to get at least another brigade before they attacked him again. I immediately sent Captain Kellogg to hurry up General Sheridan, whose division, I had been informed, would be sent to me. About 2 P. M., hearing heavy firing to my right and rear through the woods, very soon after Captain Kellogg left me, I turned in that direction and was riding to the slope of the hill in my rear to ascertain the cause. Just as I passed out of the woods bordering the State road I met Captain Kellogg returning, who reported to me that in attempting to reach General Sheridan he had met a large force in an open corn-field to the rear of Reynolds's position, advancing cautiously, with a strong line of skirmishers thrown out to their front, and that they had fired on him and forced him to return. He had reported this to Colonel Harker, commanding a brigade of Wood's division, posted on a ridge a short distance to the rear of Reynolds's position, who also saw this force advancing, but, with Captain Kellogg, was of the opinion that they might be Sheridan's troops coming to our assistance. I rode forward to Colonel Harker's position and told him that, although I was expecting Sheridan from that direction, if these

troops fired on him, seeing his flags, he must return their fire and resist their further advance. He immediately ordered his skirmishers to commence firing, and took up a position with his brigade on the crest of a hill a short distance to his right and rear, placing his right in connection with Brannan's division and portions of Beatty's and Stanley's brigades, of Negley's division, which had been retired to that point from the left, as circumstantially narrated in the report of General John Beatty and Colonel Stanley. I then rode to the east of the hill referred to above. On my way I met General Wood, who confirmed me in the opinion that the troops advancing upon us were the enemy, although we were not then aware of the disaster to the right and center of our army. I then directed them to place his division on the prolongation of Brannan's, who, I had ascertained from Hood, was on the top of the hill above referred to, and to resist the further advance of the enemy as long as possible. I sent my aid, Captain Kellogg, to notify General Reynolds that our right had been turned and that the enemy was in his rear and in force. General Wood barely had time to dispose his troops on the left of Brannan before another of those fierce assaults, similar to those made in the morning on my lines, was made on him and Brannan combined, and kept up by the enemy throwing in fresh troops as fast as those in their front were driven back until nightfall. About the time that Wood took up his position General Gordon Granger appeared on my left flank at the head of Steedman's division of his corps. I immediately dispatched a staff officer—Captain Johnson, Second Indiana Cavalry, of Negley's

division—to him with orders to push forward and take position on Brannan's right, which order was complied with with the greatest promptness and alacrity, Steedman moving his division into position with almost as much precision as if on drill, and fighting his way to the crest of the hill on Brannan's right, moved forward his artillery and drove the enemy down the southern slope, inflicting on him a most terrible loss in killed and wounded. This opportune arrival of fresh troops revived the flagging spirits of our men on the right and inspired them with new ardor for the contest. Every assault of the enemy from that time until nightfall was repulsed in the most gallant style by the whole line. By this time the ammunition in the boxes of the men was reduced on an average to two or three rounds per man, and my ammunition trains having been unfortunately ordered to the rear by some unauthorized person, we should have been entirely without ammunition in a very short time had not a small supply come up with General Steedman's command. This being distributed among the troops gave them about ten rounds per man. General Garfield, chief of staff of General Rosecrans, reached this position about 4 P. M., in company with Lieutenant-Colonel Thruston, of McCook's staff, and Captains Gaw and Barker, of my staff, who had been sent to the rear to bring back the ammunition if possible. General Garfield gave me the first reliable information that the right and center of our own army had been driven, and of its condition at that time. I soon after received a dispatch from General Rosecrans directing me to assume command of all forces, and with Crittenden and McCook take a strong position

and assume a threatening attitude at Rossville, sending the unorganized forces to Chattanooga for reorganization, stating that he would examine the ground at Chattanooga and then join me; also that he had sent out rations and ammunition to meet me at Rossville. I determined to hold the position until nightfall if possible, in the meantime sending Captains Barker and Kellogg to distribute the ammunition, Major Lawrence, my chief of artillery, having been previously sent to notify the different commanders that ammunition would be supplied them shortly. As soon as they reported the distribution of the ammunition I directed Captain Willard to inform the division commanders to prepare to withdraw their commands as soon as they received orders. At 5.30 P. M. Captain Barker, commanding my escort, was sent to notify General Reynolds to commence the movement, and I left the position behind General Wood's command to meet Reynolds and point out to him the position where I wished him to form line to cover the retirement of the other troops on the left. In passing through an open woods bordering on the State road, and between my last and Reynolds's position, I was cautioned by a couple of soldiers, who had been to hunt water, that there was a large rebel force in these woods drawn up in line and advancing toward me. Just at this time I saw the head of Reynolds's column approaching, and calling to the general himself, directed him to form line perpendicular to the State road, changing the head of his column to the left with his right resting on that road, and to charge the enemy who were then in his immediate front. This movement was made with the utmost prompti-

tude, and, facing to the right while on the march, Turchin threw his brigade upon the rebel force, routing them and driving them in utter confusion, entirely beyond Baird's left. In this splendid advance more than two hundred prisoners were captured and sent to the rear. Colonel Robinson, commanding the Twentieth Brigade, Reynolds's division, followed closely upon Turchin, and I posted him on the road leading through the ridge, to hold the ground while the troops on our right and left passed by. In a few moments General Willich, commanding a brigade of Johnson's division, reported to me that his brigade was in position on a commanding piece of ground to the right of the ridge road. I directed him to report to General Reynolds and assist in covering the retirement of the troops. Turchin's brigade, after driving the enemy a mile and a half, was reassembled, and took its position on the ridge road with Robinson and Willich. These dispositions being made, I sent orders to Generals Wood, Brannan, and Granger to withdraw from their positions. Johnson's and Baird's divisions were attacked at the moment of retiring, but, by being prepared, retired without confusion or any serious losses. General Palmer was also attacked while retiring. Gross's brigade was thrown into some confusion, but Cruft's brigade came off in good style, both, however, with little loss. I then proceeded to Rossville, accompanied by General Garfield and Gordon Granger, and immediately prepared to place the troops in position at that point. One brigade of Negley's division was posted in the gap on the Ringgold road, and two brigades on the top of the ridge, to the right of the road, adjoining the bri-



gade in the road; Reynolds's division on the right of Negley's and reaching to the Dry Valley road; Brannan's division in the rear of Reynolds's right as a reserve; McCook's corps on the right of the Dry Valley road and stretching toward the west, his right reaching nearly to Chattanooga Creek. Crittenden's entire corps was posted on the heights to the left of the Ringgold road, with Steedman's division, of Granger's corps, in reserve behind his left, Baird's division in reserve and in supporting distance of the brigade in the gap. McCook's brigade, of Granger's corps, was also posted as a reserve to the brigade of Negley's on the top of the ridge, to the right of the road. Minty's brigade of cavalry was on the Ringgold road about one mile and a half in advance of the gap. About 10 A. M. on the 21st received a message from Minty that the enemy were advancing on him with a strong force of cavalry and infantry. I directed him to retire through the gap and post his command on our left flank, and throw out strong reconnoitering parties across the ridge to observe and report any movements of the enemy on our left front. From information received from citizens, I was convinced that the position was untenable in the face of the odds we had opposed to us, as the enemy could easily concentrate upon our right flank, which, if driven, would expose our center and left to be cut entirely off from our communications. I therefore advised the commanding general to concentrate the troops at Chattanooga. About the time I made the suggestion to withdraw, the enemy made a demonstration in the direct road, but were soon repulsed. In anticipation of this order to concentrate at Chattanooga, I sent for the corps



commanders and gave such general instructions as would enable them to prepare their commands for making the movement without confusion. All wagons, ambulances, and surplus artillery carriages were sent to the rear before night. The order for the withdrawal being received about 6 P. M., the movement commenced at 9 P. M. in the following order: Strong skirmish lines, under the direction of judicious officers, were thrown out to the front of each division to cover this movement, with directions to retire at daylight, deployed and in supporting distance, the whole to be supported by the First Division, Fourteenth Army Corps, under the superintendence of Major-General Rousseau, assisted by Minty's brigade of cavalry, which was to follow after the skirmishers. Crittenden's corps was to move from the mills to the left of the road at 9 A. M., followed by Steedman's division. Next, Negley's division was to withdraw at 10 P. M., then Reynolds's, McCook's corps, by divisions from left to right, moving within supporting distance one after the other. Brannan's was posted at 6 P. M. on the road about half way between Rossville and Chattanooga to cover the movement. The troops were withdrawn in a quiet, orderly manner, without the loss of a single man, and by 7 A. M. on the 22d were in their positions in front of Chattanooga, which had been assigned to them previous to their arrival and which they now occupied, covered by strong intrenchments thrown up on the day of our arrival and strengthened from day to day until they were considered sufficiently strong for all defensive purposes. I respectfully refer you to the reports of division, brigade, and regimental commanders for the names of those of their

respective commands who distinguished themselves. Among them I am much gratified to find the names of Colonel F. Van Deveer, Thirty-fifth Ohio, commanding Third Brigade, and Colonel John T. Croxton, Fourth Kentucky, commanding Second Brigade, Brannan's division, both of whom I saw on Saturday, and can confirm the reports given of them by their division commander. Colonel B. F. Scribner, Thirty-eighth Indiana, commanding First Brigade, Baird's division, was on the right of that division on Saturday morning, when it was attacked in flank by an overwhelming force of the enemy and driven back; yet Colonel Scribner was enabled to rally and reorganize it without the least difficulty as soon as supported by Johnson's division."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN.

Sherman moves troops from Vicksburg and Memphis—The Meridian campaign—Destruction of railroads—Forward to Atlanta—The turning of Dalton—Advance upon Resaca—The Etowah—The Allatoona Pass—Dallas—New Hope Church—Kenesaw Mountain—Turning and capture of Marietta—Peach Tree Creek—Line of the Chattahoochee abandoned—Siege and battles of Atlanta—Johnston superseded by Hood—McPherson killed—Howard takes his place—Battle of Jonesboro—Atlanta abandoned and occupied—Sherman destroys it and drives out its inhabitants—The general order of Thomas.

AFTER a partial pursuit of the enemy as far as Ringgold, Thomas had returned to Chattanooga and had set about the task of preparing the Army of the Cumberland and getting it into perfect condition to take the field, molding it into what it indeed became—one of the thunderbolts of the war. It comprised fifty-four thousand infantry, six thousand cavalry, and a hundred and thirty guns. These, with the other contingents of Sherman's command, formed a force of ninety-nine thousand men with which to open the new campaign. To put these into perfect condition and to strengthen the communications had required six months; they

were in readiness on the 1st of May, 1864. During this time portions of Thomas's army were employed on divers duties in East Tennessee. From the date of the battle of Chattanooga until the month of May there was thus constant activity throughout the division of the Mississippi in preparation for the great spring movement, the plan of which was being excogitated by the authorities under the advice of Grant, who was now in Virginia, and made his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac. Preliminary to that plan it was essential to keep open and unobstructed the course of the Mississippi River, and by destroying the enemy's communications to interfere with his Eastern movements. The main forces with which these objects would be accomplished were McPherson's Seventeenth Corps, then at Vicksburg, and Hurlburt's Sixteenth, which was at Memphis. Very little more need be said of the famous "Meridian Raid"—the details of which will be elsewhere given—than is necessary to understand its bearings upon the Atlanta campaign soon to be entered upon.

Leaving things in and around Chattanooga under the control of General Thomas, Sherman, having had a conference with Grant, went to Memphis and Vicksburg, and after careful preparation started on the 3d of February from the latter place, with about ten thousand men from the two corps just mentioned and a large contingent of cavalry

under General William Sooy Smith. The objective point was Meridian, a railroad center of vital importance to the Confederates. The Mobile and Ohio Railroad and the Southern Mississippi Railroad intersect each other there. Overcoming all obstructions which had been put in his path, he captured the town and destroyed it entirely, with all the engines, running stock, mills, and workshops. For a considerable distance in every direction the railroad tracks and bridges were destroyed. It was rapid and complete desolation. In seventeen days he had broken up a hundred and fifty miles of track, and ten days later he was back at Vicksburg.

It should be observed, in passing, that one object at least of Banks's disastrous Red River expedition was to make a diversion in Sherman's favor, while Farragut's threatening aspect toward Mobile, which issued in its capture during the following summer, satisfied both Grant and Sherman that the new and far-reaching movement he was about to enter upon would not be imperiled from those directions. He would have but one army to fight, and that in his immediate front. In the meantime large quantities of provisions, munitions, and other stores had been collected at Chattanooga, and all the troops destined for the new campaign were ordered to concentrate there on April 27th. By May 6th they were all in position and ready to march southward, Atlanta being the objective point. The work being

thus in complete readiness, Sherman went to Nashville to meet and confer with General Grant, and thence he proceeded to Chattanooga. His army was thus disposed, and the following was its exact composition: The Fourth Corps, General Howard; the Fourteenth, General John M. Palmer; the Twentieth, General Hooker. The division commanders of the Fourth were Stanley, Newton, and T. J. Wood; of the Fourteenth, R. W. Johnson, J. C. Davis, and A. Baird; of the Twentieth, Alpheus Williams, J. W. Geary, and Daniel Butterfield. The Army of the Tennessee, under General McPherson, was near Lee and Gordon's Mills. It contained twenty-four thousand men and ninety-six guns. The Army of the Ohio, under General Schofield, was near Red Clay; it numbered thirteen thousand men and twenty-eight guns. The Army of the Cumberland, under General Thomas, was stationed near Ringgold; it was, as has been said, sixty thousand strong, with a hundred and thirty guns and a large cavalry force. Thus it will be seen that General Sherman was about to move south with a force of ninety-nine thousand men and two hundred and fifty guns.\*

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\* The enemy's force upon which Sherman was to move, which would block his pathway at every point and resist his advance, consisted of forty thousand men, divided into three corps, under Hardee, Hood, and Polk, with about four thousand cavalry under Wheeler. General Johnston had been urgent for re-enforcements with which to take the initiative, but they did not

The first strong point which threatened their advance was Dalton. It was now to be seen whether the new rebel commander, General Joseph E. Johnston, would content himself with the defensive, or would have the temerity of attempting to retake Chattanooga. In order to unveil the enemy's purpose, Thomas, acting under instructions from Sherman, had made a demonstration in force upon Rocky Face, which is split in two by Buzzard's Roost Gap. As the railroad line passed through the gap it seemed to open a gateway to Dalton, but it was found so strongly fortified that a direct assault would be very injudicious, and the troops were withdrawn. Then began that system of *turnings* which forms the principal feature of the Atlanta campaign.

McPherson was ordered to move by Ship's Gap and Villanow and thence through Snake Creek Gap, and to threaten Resaca. Thus Dalton would be taken in rear, and its garrison must either retreat or be cut off. With regard to the movement by Snake Creek Gap, it should be clearly observed that General Thomas saw the situation better than General Sherman. When the feint was made upon Buzzard's Roost and it was determined to move through Snake

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come. His sole recourse during the entire campaign seems to have been a masterly and skillful retreat—a sad necessity, for an army that is always fighting in retreat forgets how to advance. Let it be said, however, just here, that, in the opinion of military men, Johnston displayed in that protracted retreat the finest qualities of a soldier and a general.

Creek Gap, the propositions of Thomas were, first, to be permitted to move with his larger corps which would have assured success, or, secondly, to re-enforce McPherson by Hooker's corps. Neither of these suggestions was accepted by Sherman, and consequently the movement made by McPherson's weaker force was not successful; but Sherman, who repaired his errors quite as rapidly as he made them, then sent his whole army through Snake Creek Gap and accomplished the turning movement which might have been made by a single corps, leaving the rest to march directly down upon the enemy.

To be a little more precise, the turning of Dalton was on this wise: On the 10th of May General Schofield marched directly from the North upon the defenses of the town. Thomas again made a strong demonstration upon Buzzard's Roost Gap, while McPherson was threatening the Southern gaps. The result was immediate. Johnston abandoned Dalton and fell back upon Resaca, and so the keynote was struck for the rest of the campaign. We anticipate in saying that all the Confederate positions were turned, one after another, not without severe fighting, however, until Atlanta was captured.

On the 14th of May Johnston was strongly fortified at Resaca. Here the process was repeated. A pontoon bridge was laid at Lay's Ferry to the west and in rear of Resaca, by which the Oostenaula River could be crossed and the railroad cut in rear



of Resaca, at Calhoun, only five miles distant. An attack was made in front on the same day by McPherson, which was unsuccessful, and Johnston now made a counter attack with great vigor against Thomas and Schofield, who formed the left of Sherman's army. The battle was fierce from three o'clock until ten that night. The losses in the Union army during these two days were nearly five thousand men, while those of the enemy, fighting for the most part under cover, were twenty-five hundred. After a final and unsuccessful attempt to turn Sherman's left, Johnston was obliged to retreat again on the 15th, and, crossing the Oostenaula, he moved rapidly to the passage of the Etowah River, over which the railroad passes, at a town of the same name—Etowah. This was a practical abandonment also of Rome and Kingston.

The Union army marched relentlessly down at his very heels, giving him no rest—Thomas by the direct road, McPherson by Lay's Ferry, and Schofield by roads to the left. But he frequently turned upon his pursuers. There was incessant fighting in retreat through Cassville and Kingston, at the latter of which was the main body of Johnston's force, posted to the west to oppose these turning movements. Kingston was selected as ground where he could advantageously give battle and defend the line of the Etowah. Every step farther south rendered the fate of Atlanta more doubtful.

What Johnston might have accomplished had there been concord and harmony in his ranks it is difficult to say ; but, handicapped as he already was, there now appeared an enemy in his camp as dangerous and more insidious than the Union army ; the dissensions among his generals approached insubordination. Hood and Polk received his instructions so coldly, and executed them so reluctantly, that his best schemes fell to the ground.

If he selected a field for battle, he was met with the words, "This is no place to make a stand." If he ordered a concerted movement, he saw that it would fail for want of concert, and so, reluctantly, he abandoned his own purposes, because he saw that without concord and harmony they could not succeed. When he found that he must give up the scheme of fighting at Kingston, a ground which certainly presented great advantages to his concentrated force, he sadly issued orders for the crossing of the Etowah River, burned his stores at Cartersville, on the railroad just north of Etowah, and again concentrated his forces at Allatoona Pass, five miles to the south. It will be kept in mind that his line of march had been along the railroad which runs through Kingston, Cartersville, and Allatoona Pass to Marietta. There had been conflicts, some of them quite severe, in different parts of this theater by detached forces, but Johnston's main body awaited Sherman at Allatoona Pass, while a consid-

erable detachment proceeded to fortify New Hope Church and Dallas, which lie among hilly knobs about ten miles west of Marietta.\* Sherman's strategy continued the same; he was to resort again to the turning process, and Johnston did his best to block his way. The Union division of Jefferson C. Davis had as a precautionary measure occupied Rome, capturing the forts, mills, and heavy guns. From the inception of the movement down to this time there had been incessant fighting. All portions of Sherman's army had been engaged. He now gave them a needed rest of a few days before advancing upon New Hope Church, where Hood with a very large force was strongly fortified.

The relative numbers of the two opposing armies were as two to one—the three armies commanded by Sherman numbering about a hundred thousand men. But the disparity was somewhat neutralized by the fact that Johnston was not only on the interior line, but that he had the choice of positions in his efforts to obstruct Sherman's Southern movements and resist his attacks.

It was therefore the policy of the Union general

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\* On the 25th of May Thomas marched his corps by four roads converging upon Dallas, and so timely were his movements that, when Geary's advance was strongly resisted, abundant reinforcements were at hand. We may pause to observe that, so severe had been the fighting in the Army of the Cumberland, that during the month of May alone it had lost over a thousand killed and nearly seven thousand wounded.

to turn his positions, and as far as possible to force him to attack if he declined to retreat. Both of the generals performed their allotted tasks remarkably well.

We thus reach the next great step in the campaign, which was the turning of the Allatoona Pass. The same tactics were employed as before : strongly threatening the enemy in front while making a circuit still more strongly to the right. On the 12th of May, in pursuance of this plan, McPherson moved directly upon Resaca. The army of Thomas followed him, but was soon deflected to the Confederate left, and following the Dalton and Calhoun road, they came up to connect on McPherson's right. Schofield with the Army of the Ohio moved still farther to the right and came into line on Thomas's right. The operations of Johnston were just the converse. He made a desperate effort to turn the left of Schofield. For a brief space it seemed as if his attack on Williams's division would be successful; but it failed. And so on the night of the 15th of May Johnston abandoned Resaca, which was occupied the next morning by Thomas with the Army of the Cumberland.

Not a minute was lost. On the 17th Thomas moved forward with the divisions of Palmer and Hooker; the Army of the Tennessee marched on his right in echelon, the Army of the Ohio on the left moving in full force upon Kingston and threatening

the railroad. Never was a general more beset and hampered than Johnston. He would have given battle at Cassville, and Hardee was in favor of doing so, but Polk and Hood both opposed it, and Johnston therefore abandoned the idea, crossed the Etowah River, and fell back upon Allatoona Pass. There at least the Confederate generals agreed in their councils. They would defend Dallas to the last extremity.

On the 25th of May the Union army moved, Thomas in advance. They marched by four roads, and their celerity was such that they saved the bridge over Pumpkin Vine Creek. Pushing on to New Hope Church, they found the enemy very strongly intrenched both there and at Dallas, Hardee on their left, Hood on the right, and Polk in the center. At the church was fought one of the most terrible battles of the war. The aim of the enemy was to turn the Union left, and so the troops were rapidly moved to re-enforce that portion of the field. For a time Cleburne almost succeeded in turning Wood's division on the left. The battle raged with apparently doubtful results, but, under cover of a fierce evening attack on McPherson, Johnston, fearing lest the railroad should be struck, again retired, and so Allatoona Pass was turned.

It was indeed high time to give the troops a little additional rest, at least from actual fighting. It was now the 5th of June, and no movement was made

until the 10th. The railroad was repaired; the bridge over the Etowah was rebuilt; Allatoona Pass was fortified and made a temporary base of supplies. Additional comfort as well as strength was afforded by the arrival of General Blair, on the 9th of June, with nine thousand additional men.

But notwithstanding the success that had attended the Union arms thus far, a more difficult struggle was awaiting them not far distant. Johnston occupied a very strong position in front of Marietta. The ridge of the Kenesaw Mountains is made up of connected conical peaks with outlying spurs. The chief of these latter are Pine and Lost Mountains. The position is one of the most difficult to assault which can be conceived. There were continuous high fortifications on Pine and Lost Mountains, and Gilgath Church on the railroad was also strongly fortified. The terrain was intersected by ravines, rendering approach to the fortifications particularly difficult; but Sherman was not intimidated by them. Thomas moved directly to the front, while McPherson attempted to turn Kenesaw. Again a severe contest took place, for Johnston had contracted his line and met the advance of Thomas with a very strong force. The fighting was desperate on both sides. Newton and Wood brought their divisions very near to the enemy's works. At 3 P. M. Hood made an attack in triple line, his troops loudly shouting as they advanced. It was repulsed by a

tremendous artillery fire from the Union line; but the carnage was great. It was then that Thomas, with his usual sagacity, suggested that McPherson should advance at once to the attack of Marietta, which was covered by these strong fortifications.

On the 14th of June, General Polk was killed while inspecting his troops on the front line. It was by the second shot fired from a rifled section of the Fifth Indiana Battery, which exploded in a group of Confederate officers. Our signal men deciphered at once the signal made from Pine Mountain to Marietta.—“Send our ambulance for General Polk’s body.” General Johnston thereupon abandoned Lost Mountain and contracted his lines. There was unceasing fire on the picket line, notwithstanding the incessant rain. Sherman now determined to assault Kenesaw Mountain. But the objection of Thomas, “to butting against breastworks twelve feet thick, strengthened by abatis,” proved to be sound judgment, for the attack on Kenesaw failed signally, and once more resort was had to the turning process. That was successful as before.

On the 3d of July Johnston abandoned Kenesaw and left Marietta to be occupied by the Union troops. At 8 A. M. on the 3d of July Thomas was in Marietta, and rapid preparations were made for a combined movement against the enemy at Atlanta.

The Chattahoochee River flows in front of Atlanta, four or five miles distant. A very strong *tête-de-*

*pont* covers the railroad crossing on that stream near Peach Tree Creek. The main stream and this tributary form, therefore, a very strong line protecting the railroad.

It will be kept in mind that the constant object of Johnston was to neutralize the superior numbers of Sherman, while the purpose of the latter was to overwhelm his adversary by these greater numbers; and this was best done by the tactics already so successfully employed. This time the first step in the turning process was by the Union left. Schofield crossed the river above Peach Tree Creek and made a strong demonstration on Johnston's right flank, the result of which was inevitable. The Confederate general abandoned the Chattahoochee and fell back upon Atlanta.

Dire was the consternation in that devoted city and throughout the South. The inhabitants of Atlanta had fondly hoped that, whatever other defenses might fail, the Chattahoochee was a magic line which could not be passed. But the circle of the hunt was being reduced to its center. Sherman crossed the river in two places. Schofield was at Decatur, followed closely by McPherson, and Thomas had passed the boasted line of Peach Tree Creek.

This last Confederate disaster exhausted the patience of their authorities. It was at this critical moment that Mr. Davis resolved upon what proved to be a fatal change of commanders. By order of



July 17th Johnston was relieved of the command, and Hood was put in his place.

Apart from the application of the Western proverb, "It's no time to think of swapping horses," the change was in itself a mistaken one. Johnston was a model soldier and an excellent general. Hood was a fine soldier too, but a very poor general. Johnston was expected to perform impossibilities, and when he failed Mr. Davis turned in desperation to the fiercest fighting man in that army. Thus it was that Hood's dashing valor was an element of weakness. I only express my own honest judgment. I am aware that there are many who think that the change was wise, and that the choice of Hood, with an active aggressive policy, presented the only chance left the Confederacy. Hood certainly failed in part because his battalions were not heavy enough, as well as from rashness and the want of proper support from his lieutenants.

The military student looks in vain to find faults and mistakes in the masterly retreat of Johnston. He will find many in the foolhardy assaults of Hood. The change, however, presented to the citizens of Atlanta a new chance and a new hope. By a less Fabian policy than that of Johnston, the task of Hood was to save that city, with the forty-one thousand infantry and ten thousand cavalry turned over to him by Johnston. Hood lost no time, but went to work in fierce warrior style to accomplish this task.

The Union army was gradually but surely marching down upon him—Thomas on the right, Schofield in the center, and McPherson on the left. In order to stay them, Hood made two successive attacks, each a rapid and somewhat unexpected blow. On the 18th of July, Thomas having crossed the creek, Hood approached, for some distance concealed from view; Hardee fiercely attacked the divisions of Newton and Geary in turn, but some artillery which had been prudently posted by Thomas checked them and caused them to retire. For a time he had partial success in both, but he was finally driven back discomfited. General Johnston had considered the Union position on Peach Tree Creek as practically unassailable, but regarded the most opportune moment for attack to be when Sherman was crossing the river and the creek. It would have been better had Hood adopted his views, for when he had failed in his attack he was obliged to fall back, leaving his dead and wounded upon the field—nearly five thousand in number. The fierceness of the battle may be known from the fact that Thomas's Army of the Cumberland alone lost sixteen hundred men. Thus it was that Hood was beaten, principally by Thomas, at Peach Tree Creek.

In order to give some practical idea of the work done by the Army of the Cumberland, the following order of Thomas is inserted, bearing date of July 25, 1864:

“The major general commanding congratulates the troops upon the brilliant success which has attended the Union arms in the late battles, and which has been officially reported as follows :

“In the battle of the 20th inst., in which the Twentieth Corps, one division of the Fourth Corps, and part of the Fourteenth Corps was engaged—total Union loss, killed, wounded, and missing, seventeen hundred and thirty-three. In front of the Twentieth Corps there were put out of the fight six thousand rebels. Five hundred and sixty-three of the enemy were buried by our own troops, and the rebels were permitted to bury two hundred and fifty additional themselves. The second division of the Fourth Corps repulsed seven assaults of the enemy, with slight loss to themselves, which must swell the rebel loss much beyond six thousand. Prisoners captured, three hundred, and seven stand of colors. No report has yet been received of the part taken in this battle by the Fourteenth Army Corps.

“In the battle of the 22d the total Union loss in killed, wounded, and missing, thirty-five hundred, and ten pieces of artillery. Rebel loss—prisoners captured, thirty-two hundred. Known dead of the enemy in front of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Corps and one division of the Seventeenth Corps, twenty-one hundred and forty-two. The other division of the Seventeenth Corps repulsed six assaults of the enemy before it fell back, which will swell the rebel

loss in killed to at least three thousand. There were captured from the enemy in this battle eighteen stand of colors and five thousand stand of arms."

*The Battle of Peach Tree Creek.*—As this, more than perhaps any other battle in the open field, had displayed the great generalship and splendid valor of Thomas, who with a portion of his army—four divisions and one brigade—had resisted and hurled back the furious assault of the entire Confederate force, impelled by the spirit of their new commander, Hood, it will be well to dwell a little more at length upon it.

Peach Tree Creek is a considerable stream, the north and south forks of which mingle their waters about two miles and a half from the point where the creek thus formed empties into the Chattahoochee River in front of Bolton. It forms one of the natural out-lying defenses of Atlanta. The creek is wide and muddy, and it was necessary in crossing it that the Union army should be concentrated, for fear that the enemy would attack the force crossing the creek in detail, while the other portions of the army were too far distant to co-operate. This, it will be seen, is just what happened. Sherman's order of the day, directing the convergence of the troops marching upon Atlanta, found Schofield and McPherson in the neighborhood of Decatur, while Thomas was making preparations to cross the creek, his army being on the right branch between the railroad and

Buckhead. Hood, who at this juncture had succeeded Johnston, on the 18th of July, was quick to see his opportunity and to avail himself of it.

Sherman, not awake to the critical character of the situation, nor suspecting Hood's purpose, had, however, directed the left to oblique to the right and the right to the left, in order to decrease the separation. The result was that certain of Thomas's troops, in obedience to this order, were detached from his army to the left. With his main body, however, he crossed the creek on the 19th, and so increased the gap between the right and left wings. On the morning of the 20th his whole force was across; but, while in readiness to resist or to attack, it seems certain that neither Thomas nor Sherman expected a battle there. Sherman's order of the day, already referred to, simply directing the whole of his army to move on Atlanta, indeed shows this, for that indicates that he expected the corps to converge toward each other. But he had miscalculated distances. Schofield, with the Army of the Ohio, was not able to join the left of Thomas at once; and Stanley's and Wood's divisions of Thomas's army, while moving to the left, found themselves separated from Newton's by nearly three miles of distance, which left Newton's flank exposed, while they in point of fact had joined Schofield.

Thus Thomas was left with seven divisions, while Schofield had eleven; and, worse than that, it placed

the left of Thomas in the air just as Hood was preparing to assault him in front and on the left flank. It was in this complication of untoward circumstances that the Union general became fully aware of Hood's purpose, and that everything seemed to conspire in Hood's favor. He formed his line of battle just south of Peach Tree Creek, with Stewart on his left, Hardee in the center, and Cheatham on his right. He ordered Cheatham to post his batteries so as to sweep the intervening ground and make it impossible for McPherson and Schofield to join on to Thomas; then, with the two other corps he purposed to crush Thomas, and, swooping to the right, he would penetrate into the gap between Thomas and the other two before they could unite.

Sherman had been taken at a disadvantage, and the plan of Hood was eminently well digested. But by this time Thomas had become thoroughly informed of his purpose. A very short time before the fury of Hood's onset Thomas had directed Newton to ascend a hill just in his front. In doing so Newton thoughtfully placed two guns on that hill, saying, as he did so, "It is well to have a reserve." He then moved forward, followed by Geary and Williams. This was about three o'clock in the afternoon. These three divisions received the first assault of the enemy and gallantly repulsed it. Riding rapidly to the front, Thomas directed the action from the rear of Newton's line. Seeing the emer-

gency, he hastily ordered two batteries into position at a jump, accelerating their speed, it is said, by using the flat of his sword. These opened upon the enemy double-shotted, repulsed his attack, and drove him from the field, leaving the ground heaped with his dead and wounded. Quickness of thought and splendid valor in action caused the battle of Peach Tree Creek to be another of the great victories of Thomas, and led him to say that with the Army of the Cumberland alone he could have beaten all the troops that Hood had in the field. The gap, however, had not been filled, and two days later Hood made a new trial of his strength against the Army of the Tennessee.

Nothing, however, could resist the advance of the Union troops. The enemy made but one more determined effort, the failure of which immediately preceded the fall of Atlanta.

*Jonesboro.*—A strong force of the Union army was now intrenched very near the enemy in Atlanta. Sherman's instructions to his generals were that they should seek to find weak points in the intrenched line which they could break through. In responding to these directions, Thomas said that while he would certainly look for such points, it was clearly manifest to him that it would be impossible to break the strong intrenchments in front of Atlanta. He declared that the city must be turned by its left flank, and that when the communications by the

Macon road were cut Hood would be obliged to evacuate Atlanta. General Sherman still hoped to make a direct attack, but was at last obliged to accept the turning proposition. As he moved around the town, the enemy fortified in front of him at every point—at Eastpoint, Rough and Ready, and particularly with strong intrenchments at Jonesboro. From the latter place Hood attacked Howard's Army of the Tennessee on the 31st of August, hoping with two corps to drive him across the Flint River. He was repulsed. On the same evening Sherman ordered an attack by the Fourteenth Corps upon Hardee in his intrenchments at Jonesboro, expecting the co-operation of the Army of the Tennessee upon Hardee's flank. This attack was eminently successful. He drove the enemy out of their intrenchments, and took a thousand prisoners and eight guns. But the expected co-operation of the Army of the Tennessee was not made. Had it been, and had it been followed up, it might have been followed by the capture of Hardee's entire corps and the severance of the Southern communications of the enemy. Hood's last hope of saving the city had expired. He evacuated Atlanta and gave up the struggle.

While Sherman moved relentlessly down, drawing closer round Atlanta by his right, Thomas approaching from the northeast, Schofield directly from the front, and McPherson from Decatur,



Hood's tactics were to assail the Union left and, if possible, gain its rear. In this for a short space he succeeded. There was a weak point there which Hood seized and took in flank; and when McPherson moved rapidly to set the line in order and protect the left, he rode with a single orderly directly into the Confederate line. He was killed by a shot from the skirmishers, and in the terrible battle which followed his body was for some time in their hands.\* Re-enforcements were rapidly brought up, however, and the Confederates were driven back. This was on the 22d of July. It may here be stated that, although the temporary command fell to General Logan, the permanent command of the Army of the Tennessee, vacated by the lamentable death of McPherson, was given to General O. O. Howard—much to the dissatisfaction of General Hooker, who considered himself overslaughed and ill-treated, and who threw up the command of the Fourth Corps, to which General Stanley was at once promoted.

The details of the maneuvers around Atlanta are numerous and complicated. Their philosophy is

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\* General McPherson was regarded as one of the very best Union generals. He graduated at the head of his class at West Point in 1853, and among his classmates were Sheridan, Schofield, and Hood. At the time of his death he was only thirty-five years old. Grant expressed "the highest reverence for his patriotism, his zeal, his great, almost unequaled, ability, and all the manly virtues that can adorn a commander."

very simple and clear. With a superior army in his front, should his Southern communications be also threatened, General Hood must either fight or evacuate Atlanta.

To present these alternatives in order, Sherman sent, on the 27th, a large cavalry force under Stoneman and Garrard to cut the Macon road. The threat had its influence, but the raid was a failure. Garrard came back cutting his way through two of the enemy's divisions, while Stoneman, with one division, was captured by a small force of militia. In spite, however, of these partial embarrassments, the Union army was closing in upon the devoted city, met and barred at every point by the Confederate commander. There was a very severe fight at Ezra Church, just outside the city, and it was evident to Sherman that with the very strong fortifications and heavy guns it was proof against assault, and must either be taken by regular approaches or else he must have recourse to his former tactics and turn the position. He chose the latter, and raised the siege in front of the town. Once more he employed the cavalry to cut the communications to the south, and moved his main body below Procter's Creek. The Twentieth Corps he sent back to the Chattahoochee, and thus deceived Hood into thinking that he was about to retreat. The illusion, however, was only momentary, for he soon found Thomas's army moving to the southeast upon

Jonesboro, and Schofield around Eastpoint to Rough and Ready. As soon as he saw these movements Hood moved the two corps of Lee and Hardee to Jonesboro, leaving but one corps in Atlanta. On the 31st of July he made a fierce attack upon Howard's corps near Jonesboro, which was easily repulsed, while Schofield struck the railroad and destroyed it. The critical moment had now arrived when Hood must either fight or go. One more counter movement, however, he would try. While Sherman was cutting the railroad to the south of Atlanta, Hood sent Wheeler with ten thousand cavalry to cut Sherman's Northern communications. He moved rapidly to Dalton, and north of it, but the Union general could afford to permit this raid in consideration of the great prize that lay almost within his grasp. Sherman's forces were now concentrated principally at Jonesboro. From Atlanta to Jonesboro the railroad runs on the ridge between the Flint and Ocmulgee Rivers—a good position, but not unassailable. In spite of the desperate efforts of Hood, he now saw that Atlanta was untenable. Vigorously shelled in front by Thomas, and with its chief Southern communication cut, Hood destroyed stores, shops, and factories, blew up eighty car-loads of ammunition, and evacuated the city, and the Union troops entered it on the 3d of September. Its loss to the enemy and its gain to the Union cause were both incalculable. Several railroads con-

verged there, and it was the principal manufacturing center of the South.

What to do with it was a pregnant question. Sherman decided to destroy it, and expel its inhabitants. A bitter and acrimonious correspondence took place on the subject between Sherman on the one hand and the mayor of the city and General Hood on the other. We need not further refer to it. Sherman stood firm, and Atlanta was strengthened and made a military base for the Union arms and a magazine of supplies. Although temporarily dependent for supplies on a single track from Nashville, and although feeble attempts were made to cut our communications, in the form of attacks on Allatoona and Resaca, the fortunes of the Union army proved brighter and brighter every day, and permitted Sherman to conceive the idea of leaving Hood behind and marching through Georgia to the sea. Our history leaves him substantially at this point, but it may be confidently asserted that the Atlanta campaign, ending in his capture of that stronghold, presents a larger claim to military distinction than the famous march to the sea.

In the rapid and complicated movements of that campaign it is difficult always to discern the exact part taken by a subordinate commander, but the Army of the Cumberland, under its heroic leader, played no secondary part, and had become so inured to war as to promise great successes in the future.

The news of the capture of Atlanta was received throughout the land with the greatest enthusiasm. Under date of September 3d and 4th, "the applause and thanks of the nation" were telegraphed by President Lincoln and General Grant to all engaged in it, and salutes were fired in all the principal cities. On the 10th of January a resolution of Congress was passed to the same effect.

For a very succinct epitome of what had been accomplished by this army, the order of General Thomas dated September 9, 1864, and written in Atlanta, is given :

"SOLDIERS OF THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND: The major general commanding, with pride and pleasure congratulates you upon the fact that your achievements during the campaign which has just closed, in connection with those of the armies of the Tennessee and Ohio, have received such distinguished marks of appreciation as the thanks of the President of the United States and of the major general commanding the Military Division of the Mississippi.

"Your commander now desires to add his own thanks to those you have already received, for the tenacity of purpose, uncomplaining endurance, cheerful obedience, brilliant heroism, and all those high qualities which you have displayed to an eminent degree in attacking and defeating the cohorts of treason, driving them from position after position, each of their own choosing, cutting their communications, and in harassing their flanks and rear, dur-

ing the many marches, battles, and sieges of this long and eventful campaign.

“It is impossible, within the limits of an order like this, to enumerate the many instances in which your gallantry has been conspicuous, but among them may be mentioned the actions of Rocky Face Mountain and before Dalton, fought between the 8th and 13th of May; of Resaca, on the 14th and 15th; of Adairsville, on the 17th; of New Hope Church, on the 25th of the same month; of Culp’s Farm, June 22d; Peach Tree Creek, July 20th; and the crowning one of Jonesboro, fought September 1st, which secured the capture of the city of Atlanta, the goal for which we set out more than four months ago, and furnished a brilliant termination to your struggles for that long period.

“Let these successes encourage you to the continued exercise of those same high qualities, and to renewed exertions in the cause of our country and humanity, when you shall again be called upon to meet the foe; and be assured the time is not far distant when your prowess will conquer what territory now remains within the circumscribed limits of the rebellion. A few more fields like those whose names now crowd your standards, and we can dictate the terms of a peace alike honorable to yourselves and our country. You can then retire to your homes amid the plaudits of your friends, and with the proud consciousness that you have deserved well of the country. Our rejoicings are not unmixed with a proud regret for our brave comrades who have fallen. Their graves mark the spots where they went down amid the din and roar of battle, dotting every field and hillside, or lying beneath the spreading boughs

of the forest along our route; they will in future days serve like finger-boards to point out to the traveler the march of your victorious columns. Those silent mounds appeal to us to remain true to ourselves and the country, and so to discharge the high duty devolving upon us that their lives, which they so freely offered up, may not prove a useless sacrifice.

“By command of Major-General Thomas.

“WILLIAM D. WHIPPLE,  
“*Assistant Adjutant General.*”

A few words may be aptly quoted to complete the modest recital. In the opinion of Van Horne: “In this campaign General Thomas approved of no movement which was a failure; he disapproved of none which was a success; and whenever his advice was rejected, the outcome proved that his plan would have met with every condition of success.”

By an order of General Sherman dated May 4th, measures were taken without loss of time to circumvent the enemy in his manifest intention to force Sherman out of Georgia by falling upon his communications, and by a counter movement to run a race with him to the line of the Ohio. Thomas was directed to occupy Chattanooga with the Army of the Cumberland, while the armies of the Ohio and the Tennessee were directed to move in concert and cover his rear.

Whatever plans were now to be proposed, one thing was certain, and that was, that although Atlanta was in the hands of the Union troops, the Confeder-

ate army was still in existence, active and defiant, under a dashing leader, to whom success was an absolute necessity, without which he would join the list of superseded generals who had been unable to stem the tide of Federal invasion.

It is curious to observe at this time that while Hood thought Sherman to be in retreat, Sherman believed Hood to be retiring. He was soon undeceived, however. On the 20th of September Hood moved from Lovejoy Station, following on the heels of Thomas, and on the 29th he crossed the Chattahoochee. It almost seemed that Thomas was running away from him; the two armies were traversing the same ground as in the Atlanta campaign, but in inverse order. This was permitted by Sherman, however, while he was perfecting his plans for again marching southward. Two points he must hold intact—Atlanta and Chattanooga.

It must be conceded that at this time Hood exhibited his best skill as a general, but his success was extremely evanescent. He was indeed operating between Sherman and his base, and captured a number of towns between these two cities, among which the most important was Dalton. At this time his great need was men, and his main hope was that he might receive large re-enforcements from the trans-Mississippi, with which he could make a successful invasion of Tennessee and Kentucky. This hope was not destined to be realized, although it constantly lured



him on, even to the wildly rash attack upon Thomas at Nashville.

It is not within the scope of this work to dwell upon the great diversity of operations on this field during the month of October, 1864. On the 27th Hood laid siege to Decatur, but so terrible was the artillery fire of the Union garrison and so vigorous the resistance that he abandoned the attempt on the 29th. He seems up to this time to have been entirely ignorant of the scheme which was ripening in the brain of Sherman, and he thought that by a rapid movement he could turn the Union flank and move successfully northward.

When Sherman was about to start on his famous march, and Thomas had received his instructions to fall back rapidly toward Nashville and there put himself in condition for a new advance, Hood determined to leave Sherman and abandon Georgia, not, however, dreaming of the march to the sea; and to follow Thomas at top speed, constantly threatening his flank and rear, to overtake his army, compel it to fight, and destroy it. This done, he could march triumphantly to the line of the Ohio, and, being largely re-enforced by an enthusiastic uprising on his line of march, he would threaten and perhaps accomplish a Northern invasion which would give essential aid to General Lee in his defense of Richmond, and put an entirely new face upon the whole theater of war. It should also be observed as of practical importance

that the task of Hood was made easier by the uncommonly low water in the Tennessee, which prevented the gunboats from doing their share of the great work.

These general remarks will prepare us to enter upon the brilliant double campaign which was now imminent. Indeed, up to this very moment when Hood was between Sherman and Thomas, and before the scheme which had been excogitated had been made patent to the world, according to the simile of Napoleon, "the chess board was very much befogged."

Hood's manifest difficulty would be the want of numbers; and although Jefferson Davis, after acknowledging that he had depleted the other armies to the greatest extent, still hoped that recruits would gather in his train, every day proved that it would be a vain hope.

On the other hand, while it may be doubted whether Sherman gave Thomas his fair proportion of that army for the work which lay before him, and while even that proportion was to some extent hypothetical, made up of garrisons and small detachments all over the ground on which he moved, and while still further it must be acknowledged that everything was to be experimental, yet it soon became clear that Thomas's force would increase rapidly as he retired and outnumber Hood when he should make his grand stand and deliver battle.

Just before we reach the time when the division between the two Union commanders was to be made it may be well to stop and cast a glance upon the position and composition of the Union forces under Thomas. He had the Fourth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland, two divisions of the Sixteenth Corps of the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Ohio, and the Twenty-third Corps. With these should be enumerated the widely scattered forces of recruits and convalescents which Sherman had left behind for him to gather up, and such forces as might join him from the North. The Fourth Corps was commanded by General Stanley, the Twenty-third by General Schofield, the divisions of the Sixteenth by General Andrew J. Smith, and all the cavalry by General James H. Wilson.

All this looked very well on paper, but the different commands were scattered, and it would require time and assiduity to unite them. Van Horne says—and he speaks for General Thomas—that had the Fourteenth Corps been given to Thomas instead of the Twenty-third, he would have had five thousand more men, and the unpleasant questions with regard to rank as between Schofield and Stanley would have been avoided.

It seems now that Sherman could have treated Thomas a little more generously. He set him a Herculean task to perform, and scarcely force enough with which to do it. Thus it is that the reader of

the campaign of Nashville should be prepared beforehand to understand the difficulties in the way of Thomas, his inadequate numbers, his scattered divisions, the heterogeneous nature of his troops, his unmounted cavalry, his solicitude as to supplies, and the very grave character of the issues dependent upon his action. And with this foreknowledge he will not limit his judgment of Thomas's great merits to the splendid sortie at Nashville, but will observe his careful, difficult, and excellent dispositions in spite of numerous obstacles from the moment his communications were cut with General Sherman, and he found himself for the first time since Mill Springs, and on a far grander field, an entirely independent commander.

We may pause for a moment to catch a glimpse of his personality at this time. The following anecdote is told by Sherman: He saw one of his men roasting ears of corn, and stopped to talk to him. "What are you doing?" he said. "Why, general, I am laying in a supply of provisions." Thomas, always anxious about supplies, rejoined, "That is right, my man, but don't waste your provisions." As he turned away the man murmured, "There goes the old man, economizing as usual."

## CHAPTER XI.

### ON TO NASHVILLE.—FRANKLIN.

Doubts as to the movement of Hood—Sherman's march to the sea—Who first proposed this scheme?—Thomas and Hood compared—Hood's hopes of re-enforcement vain—Without it his movement very rash—Opinions of Sherman and Grant—Thomas's force increases to about fifty thousand—Hood's about the same—Nashville the objective point for both—Columbia and Spring Hill—Schofield at Franklin—The battle—Opdycke's gallant charge—Schofield eludes Hood and joins Thomas—Hood's criticism of Franklin—He invests Nashville on December 2d—Description of the field—Urgency from Washington—Halleck, Grant, Stanton—Thomas will not move until ready.

DISPATCHES from General Grant at this time show his concern at first on account of the erratic but brilliant movements of Hood, which did not yet disclose his final purpose, because that depended to some extent on the Federal plans and movements not yet made manifest. This concern was shared by the entire North. It seemed still doubtful what Hood meant, and it was feared that large numbers would flock to his standard, re-enforcing him so greatly that he could afford to let Sherman go and rush torrent-like upon Tennessee. It was very soon after the capture of Atlanta that the new scheme had been

devised—to which all movements now were tending—for dividing the army of Sherman, one part of which was to be employed in the famous march through Georgia to the sea, while the other should take care of Tennessee and Kentucky and the line of the Ohio : and this was to be confided to Thomas. Between the two, with the choice which he would attack and impede, was Hood, but without regard to his decision the Union plan was in process of arrangement, in consonance with the campaign of Grant in Virginia, and indeed with all parts of the great field.

Thus, on the grand chessboard of the war Grant would hold Lee in check at Richmond, and either capture him there or force his evacuation of that capital, with the certainty of capturing him or destroying him afterward ; Sherman with a large army would march through Georgia and strike for the sea-coast ; while Thomas, placed in temporary command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, in succession to Sherman, with the remnant of the force left by Sherman, consisting at first of the Fourth Corps and the surrounding garrisons, but afterward reinforced by the Twenty-third Corps under Schofield, and the cavalry, mounted and dismounted, under Wilson, would hasten to Nashville to defend the frontier of Kentucky, and there await the coming of the enemy if he should be rash enough to follow him ; and put an end at once to his schemes and his hopes.

It seems unwise and unnecessary to moot the

question who conceived this plan. There is no such great originality and merit about the conception, in our judgment, as to make it worth the controversy. The champions of Grant ascribe it to him, at least in first suggestion. Those of Sherman declare that he was the originator of the scheme, and had been turning it over in his mind long before it was accepted and arranged. Sherman says in reference to a letter of Thomas, written October 17, 1864, "At that date neither General Grant nor General Thomas favored any proposed plan of campaign." The admirers of General Thomas have also given him credit for this proposed arrangement of the campaign, at least in the rough plan. This he never claimed, however. In the striking of balances Sherman probably deserves the credit of proposing the scheme, which is at once merged into his greater achievement; and, after all, it would seem patent enough to suggest itself to most minds. It was manifest that Sherman must either join Grant or *débouche* somewhere on the coast. Grant did not want him. The Confederate army under Hood did not need so large a force as Sherman's entire army to oppose it. His conclusion as to the exact route was logical from these premises. His march to the South would demonstrate the true condition of things in the Southeast, already suspected: the lack of troops and resources, the waning enthusiasm—"the beginning of the end."

What Hood would do was, as we have seen, for some time a question. Would he seek to cut Sherman's Northern communications? Sherman was already planning to abandon them, holding on, however, to Chattanooga and Atlanta. Would he try to impede his march southward? Sherman could beat him at that game with excess of numbers; and, if he did try it, General Thomas was on his flank, a real thorn in his side.

It was soon evident that, considering Thomas the easier prey, he would leave Sherman and march after Thomas at once, follow close on his tracks, bring him to bay before he could reach Nashville or concentrate his forces, gain his rear, scatter his army, press at once across Kentucky into Ohio, and thus make a tremendous diversion in favor of Lee at Richmond while Sherman was marching southward and could render no assistance.

Let Sherman take Savannah if he could; there was a splendid chance for the Confederacy. If Hood could only turn the tables and annihilate Thomas, it would be giving a Roland for an Oliver. One thing is certain: as late as November 1st Grant was still in doubt even as to the propriety of the movement. He could not indeed know the situation as well as Sherman, who was on the ground, but he wrote to Sherman at that date: "If you can see the chance for destroying Hood's army, attend to that first, and make your other movements secondary."



The answer of Sherman was prompt and enthusiastic: "We have now ample supplies at Chattanooga and at Atlanta to stand a month's interruption to our communications, and I don't believe the Confederate army can reach our lines save by cavalry raids; and Wilson will have cavalry enough to checkmate that. I am clearly of the opinion that the best results will follow me in my contemplated movement through Georgia." The next day Grant gave his permission.

We have spoken of the destitution, in a military point of view, of the country through which Sherman was to march. It was one of Hood's blunders to permit such a disclosure; he does not seem to have thought of it, and we now wonder that the Confederate authorities did not direct him to obstruct Sherman's march to the utmost. The destitution was chiefly in troops; Sherman seems to have found abundance of supplies.

The following order issued by General Sherman on the 26th of October, 1864, clearly sets forth the powers of General Thomas after his separation from Sherman:

"HEADQUARTERS, MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,

"IN THE FIELD, GAYLESVILLE, ALA., *October 26, 1864.*

"In the event of military movements or the accidents of war separating the general in command from his military division, Major-General George H. Thomas, commanding the Department of the Cum-

berland, will exercise command over all troops and garrisons not absolutely in the presence of the general in chief. The commanding generals of the departments and armies of the Ohio and Tennessee, will forthwith send abstracts of their returns to General Thomas at Nashville, in order that he may understand the position and distribution of troops; and General Thomas may call for such further reports as he may require, disturbing the actual condition of affairs and mixing up the troops of separate departments as little as possible, consistent with the interests of the service."

We may pause for a moment just here to consider the two men now to be pitted against each other—Thomas and Hood. They were both splendid soldiers, but were, however, otherwise in great and striking contrast. Thomas, characterized by Sherman as "the man best qualified to manage the affairs of Tennessee and North Mississippi," was cool-headed, cautious, careful, valiant, and tenacious of purpose, when once his purpose was settled; forecasting and considering everything, leaving nothing to chance, as far as it was possible to eliminate chance from military operations.

Hood was a graduate of West Point in McPherson's class, large of frame, full of vigor and impulse, a manly and dashing soldier, industrious and energetic, a soldier by intuition as well as by profession; enthusiastic and impulsive; brave to a fault; having lost an arm and leg in the forefront of battle, the

one at Gettysburg and the other at Chickamauga; inconsiderate, ready to risk all his other members and his life on similar conditions.

Sanguine by temperament, and trusting his subordinates, sometimes foolishly, he hoped to recruit his rather inadequate force by an enthusiastic rising of the people at his call as he marched. They would certainly rally to his standard if they shared his hopes. In this he was to be sadly mistaken. The Confederate enthusiasm was now rapidly waning. The people did not join him in what now really appeared to be the losing cause. The region of the farther South was itself clamoring for troops. Like boasting Glendower in the drama, the Confederate Government could "call spirits from the vasty deep," but they would no longer come.

When his eyes were opened to this state of things Hood had already cast all upon the hazard of the die, and it was no time for him to change his purpose. His great, his last hope was, by forced marches to get in rear of Thomas before he could reach Nashville, to bring him to a stand, and to rout his army. "These convictions," he says, "counterbalanced my regret that Sherman was permitted to traverse Georgia unopposed, as he himself admits." And again, "Had I not made the movement, I am fully persuaded that Sherman would have been upon General Lee's communications in October instead of at this time."

While Thomas was gathering together the *disjecta membra* of his command, we shall see that from first to last Hood's great difficulty was to be want of numbers; he lacked weight; but he still hoped against hope.

All this seems logical enough, but the military critic dissents from his judgment; and that this is not an opinion after the facts is proved by the concurrent views of Sherman and Grant, both of whom were disposed to do justice to his real merits. Sherman's opinion of these movements is not very flattering to Hood. In speaking generally of his rashness, and prior to his final movement, he says: "I did not suppose that General Hood, though rash, would venture to attack fortified places like Allatoona, Resaca, Decatur, and Nashville; but he did so, and in so doing played into our hands perfectly." General Grant is equally outspoken, and more directly to the point at issue. He says: "Hood, instead of following Sherman, continued his move northward, which seemed to me to be leading to his certain doom. At all events, had I had the power to command both armies, I should not have changed the orders under which he seemed to be acting."

It is worthy of consideration whether, if Hood had followed Sherman and constantly harassed his rear, while Hardee, with his fifteen or twenty thousand men, had come rapidly up to meet him and thus retard his advance, and then if there had been

a rising in Hood's favor, the result might have been different, not in the long run but for the time being.

So much in brief as to Sherman and his plans.

It now rested with Thomas, the separation having been made, to demonstrate the justness of these views by retiring slowly, gathering his command together, resisting Hood's advance, luring him on to Nashville, and, when perfectly ready, turning upon him and driving his beaten army scattered through the Southern territory, never to be again consolidated into a fighting force of any importance. Could he do these things? On November 12, 1864, the last link of telegraphic communication between Sherman and Thomas was broken. It was the first and only time since Mill Springs that the latter found himself in supreme control at the head of an army, albeit the parts of it were widely scattered; it was his grand opportunity, and he seized it with great discretion and skill. His first thought was duty; his second, his reputation as a general.

Thomas's command now consisted of the Fourth Corps, comprising three divisions, commanded at first by General Stanley and afterward, when Stanley was disabled, by General Thomas J. Wood; the Twenty-third Corps, under Schofield, which was to join him at once; and, more fortunate than Hood, he was to receive large re-enforcements from various points. Among them was a force, under General Washburne, of forty-five hundred troops, new regi-

ments sent forward to replace the old whose term of service had expired, and of men who had gone North to vote. On October 13th Halleck had informed him that two old regiments and several new ones were to report to him at Nashville. General A. J. Smith joined him later with a large detachment from the Army of the Tennessee, consisting of three divisions under Generals John McArthur and Kenner Garrard and Colonel Jonathan B. Moore; and there were several thousand convalescents fit for garrison duty who would occupy the lines at Nashville and leave the well troops free to act. There was also a force of twelve thousand cavalry under General James H. Wilson, with competent division commanders; but most of them were yet unprovided with horses, having become dismounted by the hard and destructive service in which they were engaged. These made in all, but not yet concentrated, about fifty-six thousand men. He had discharged fifteen thousand unfit for service or whose time had expired.

Hood, as we have seen, had not received the reinforcements he expected; and, with his army not much larger than that of Thomas, it might have seemed rash for him to follow Thomas to Nashville, and even risk the chance of being turned upon before reaching it; but at that time Thomas's forces were yet too widely scattered to make it as dangerous as it at first sight appeared. Had Hood moved earlier,

his chances of success would have been greater ; but he was delayed more than a month, waiting for necessary supplies.

The army of Hood was arranged in three corps, commanded respectively by Generals Lee, Cheatham, and Stewart, each containing three divisions. It numbered from forty thousand to forty-five thousand infantry, to which must be added a cavalry corps of from ten thousand to fifteen thousand men, all in excellent condition, the latter commanded by General Forrest, one of the most brilliant cavalry generals developed on either side during the war. It was evident that Hood's policy was to beat Thomas's force by detachments and before they could be united into a strong whole.

The strategy of the campaign was simple in the extreme, but the grand tactics were changing and kaleidoscopic to a remarkable degree.

Nashville was the supremely important point for both armies. For Thomas, Nashville was a place already occupied and strongly fortified in order to protect the line of the Ohio ; in which to recruit, re-organize, and plan, and from which to attack the advancing enemy. It constituted his strong base of operations. For Hood it was the Union stronghold to be captured after cutting Thomas's re-enforcements off from his line of retreat ; and if he could destroy the Federal army and occupy Nashville, it was to be a point from which to invade the North

and make a grand diversion in favor of General Lee at Richmond.

Thomas had marched with a portion of the Fourth Corps, and had entered Nashville on October 3, 1864; and from that as a point of observation he took command of all the troops and operations in Tennessee. His first thought had been to defend the line of Duck River and the Chattanooga and Nashville Railroad, but the enemy was so close at his heels that the scheme was abandoned, and the determination made to strengthen the intrenchments at Nashville, which were already strong, and await Hood's arrival. The preliminary movements had now begun. Hood had crossed the Chattahoochee on the 5th of October, and was waiting for supplies and preparing to manifest his purpose; and on the 29th of October he made a feint toward Decatur, and crossed the Tennessee with a portion of his army. In the meantime, after Hood began his movement, everything was done by the Union army to hinder his advance. The roads were obstructed by felled timber, and his march was impeded by partial attacks, mainly by the cavalry, and thus, notwithstanding the apparent vigor of his movements, his whole force was not across until November 9th, and the concerted movement made; he took eleven days to accomplish what might have been done in three. On October 30th the Twenty-third Corps had begun its march to join Thomas at Nashville, and



Hood followed in what proved to be a very rapid pursuit, with the purpose of cutting that corps off from Columbia. The Union troops had been scattered throughout that region, but were soon collected together under Schofield, and were directed to fall back, until Thomas could unite A. J. Smith's corps with Steedman and Granger, and push them to the front. Smith's delay and General Hood's rapid advance were the cause of the stop at Franklin, and the ultimate concentration, as we shall presently see, at Nashville.

When Schofield arrived at Franklin he stopped to await the instructions of Thomas, who would either largely re-enforce him and fight there, or order him to fall back upon Nashville. Thomas was, as has been said, already settled in the latter plan, while Grant from City Point was urging him to move forward and meet Hood. This was due to a want of knowledge of the situation. The route was along the railroad by Columbia and Spring Hill to Franklin. It does not fall within the scope of this work to give in detail the maneuvers and partial actions included in this movement toward Nashville. The danger was becoming greater every moment that Schofield with the Twenty-third Corps, and a few additional troops, would have his communications with Nashville cut.

The peril, which might have been avoided by greater promptitude, was indeed extreme, and was

only averted by good fortune and the bad generalship of Hood's lieutenants. General Hatch made a partial diversion at Lexington, but the Confederate advance could not be checked there. Stanley, by a rapid march, reached Columbia, where he was engaged by the enemy, and although intrenchments were thrown up, it was not thought possible to hold the line of Duck River, as the enemy's intention to turn the position became manifest, and his superior numbers made it appear feasible. Perhaps the delay of twenty-four hours at Columbia, which now seems to have been unfortunate, imperiled the army, and made the escape from Spring Hill and the desperate fighting at Franklin necessary.

After three days' stay at Columbia, while Hood's column was crossing Duck River above him, Schofield marched to Spring Hill, the enemy relentlessly following. It was a race to Spring Hill, Stanley arriving only two hours before Hood. Here the purpose of Hood was again manifest—to envelop and destroy the Federal army at that point. Through want of energy and clear intelligence on the part of General Cheatham, Hood's opportunity was there lost. That general failed to throw his corps across the turnpike, facing south, which he had ample time to do before the head of Schofield's column arrived there, and when an attack would have been entirely disastrous to Schofield's force. Making a show of resistance, Schofield availed himself

of the darkness and withdrew to Franklin, under the very guns and within sound of the voices of the enemy. He reached it with the head of the column before dawn. "Never," says Van Horne, "has an army escaped so easily from a peril so threatening."

The situation at Franklin was not the most desirable, but it was all that Schofield could make it. With both flanks posted on the Harpeth River, Schofield's forces occupied the old intrenchments there, under the personal supervision of General J. D. Cox, and batteries were well posted on both sides of the river to repel the assaults in front and flank. There he received orders from Thomas to fall back. It was now evidently the object to retard Hood's march while Thomas was making his plans, organizing his re-enforcements, and strengthening his intrenchments at Nashville. Franklin is twenty-seven miles from Columbia, but only eighteen miles from Nashville. The opportune moment for Hood had passed when Schofield had been permitted to pass by Spring Hill without being attacked. He hoped to find another chance at Franklin, for it was a doubtful question whether Schofield could withdraw from Franklin; certainly not without fighting. Franklin is a small town on the southern bank of the Harpeth, lying in a bend of the river, and forming a station of the Nashville and Decatur Railroad. Schofield had about seventeen thousand men, including six thousand cavalry under Wilson. Hood had

followed so closely that Schofield could not at once get all his troops across, which was his first intention. He was obliged, therefore, to face the enemy and repel him. He repaired the railroad bridge and constructed a foot bridge, and awaited, not without great concern, the attack of Hood, which he must receive and paralyze before he could retreat. He had sent the Third Division of the Fourth Corps (Wood) across the river, on the right, to watch the attempt of the enemy to cross and turn the flank, but was unable to withdraw the remainder of the force in immediate following, so closely was he pressed by Hood, whom he must hold at bay. The Twenty-third Corps was on the left and center, and the First Brigade of the Second Division of the Fourth Corps was behind it. Wilson's cavalry was on the north side of the Harpeth above Franklin, watching the fords, and one brigade was below watching the crossings on that flank. The remaining disposition was as follows: The First Division of the Fourth was on the right abutting on the Harpeth River; and, whether by design or overlooked in the rush of affairs, the Second and Third Brigades of the Second Division of the Fourth were considerably advanced in front of the center. This was a great mistake, as the result shows. Upon them fell the brunt of the attack. At four o'clock that afternoon Hood launched his columns—two entire corps—upon the divisions advanced in front of the Federal left and

center with such impetuosity that they were driven back in confusion, with the loss of one thousand men and several guns, while he suffered very little. Forrest's cavalry was kept in check by General Wilson, or matters would have been in a worse condition still. In this imminent peril order was restored by the great gallantry of Colonel Opdycke, of Stanley's corps, and of Stanley himself, both of whom rushed to the breach and re-established the line. It is worthy of note that Stanley wrote that day to General Thomas that Opdycke's timely movement saved the army from a ruinous defeat.

Stanley was in conference with Schofield when the loud sound of the firing reached him. He at once galloped to the front, and would have ordered Opdycke to charge, had he not seen that that gallant officer needed no order, but was already in rapid career with his brigade. Stanley's report throws light upon the entire action. According to that, when Wagner's division was driven back, Opdycke was in reserve on the Columbia pike. At the critical moment, he says:

"Could the enemy hold that part of the line, he was nearer our two bridges than the extremities of our line. Colonel Opdycke's brigade was lying down about one hundred yards in rear of the works. I rode quickly to the left regiment and called to them to charge; at the same time I saw Colonel Opdycke near the center of his line, urging

his men forward. I gave the colonel no order, as I saw him engaged in doing the very thing to save us—namely, to get possession of the line again.” Colonel Opdycke added luster to reputation already established on many fields, and which was to be further enhanced by his gallantry at Nashville. He was distinguished at Pittsburg Landing, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and in the Atlanta campaign. He deserves special recognition here, because, in the opinion of Thomas and Stanley, his charge at Franklin without orders saved the army.

The tables were entirely turned. Opdycke recaptured many of the guns, took several hundred prisoners and battle flags, and re-established the line. Hood’s desperate attacks failed chiefly for want of weight in his columns. His first assault seemed to be overpowering, but he could not keep it up. “A few thousand more men,” says a competent critic, “would have enabled him to win the battle.”

Never was more distinguished valor displayed than by both armies on that occasion. The Confederates made four attacks on that position, all of which failed, but the character of which may be judged of by the fact that they lost five generals killed, among whom was the intrepid Cleburne, six wounded, and one a prisoner of war. General Stanley himself, one of the most gallant soldiers of the war, was severely wounded on that occasion, and General T. J. Wood took command temporarily of

his Fourth Corps. The failure of these Confederate attacks so paralyzed their army that Schofield was enabled to do what he had intended—to cross the Harpeth and retreat in good order by a night march and to join Thomas at Nashville. But for the defeat of Forrest by Wilson at the same time, it is extremely doubtful whether Schofield could have retreated. It should further be observed that, while the battle of Franklin was being fought, A. J. Smith's corps was just reaching Thomas at Nashville.

Thus far Hood had been altogether baffled in his purposes; he followed Schofield to Nashville, and as that general entered the intrenched line Hood made a defiant parade in front of the city, trumpets blowing, drums beating, colors flying, and bands playing Dixie. It was indeed a great and most hazardous stake for which he was playing at Nashville, and he announced it in this boasting manner. Should he succeed, the end of the war would have been put off for some time. We can hardly think he expected to succeed, but he was thus keeping up the courage of his men and cherishing a "forlorn hope."

It will be well to pause for a moment and look back a little more in detail at the Confederate movements up to this point in the campaign, taking for our guide Hood's own account; this by way of recapitulation and a thorough intelligence of the situation, which, indeed, is the most important in the military history of Thomas.

When, after some delay, he had started from Tuscumbia and Florence to move upon the Union troops in their retreat to Nashville, he had, as has been stated, the purpose to thrust his army between that town and Schofield's force, at Columbia or Spring Hill or Franklin, and to cut off the Union retreat, and he had apparently a good chance of succeeding. This he had tried to do at Columbia and had failed. His orders were then very explicit, that a more vigorous attempt should be made at Spring Hill, where he would either bring Schofield to battle and beat him by superiority of numbers, or cut his communication with Nashville if he declined to fight. Here he might have entirely succeeded, for his plans were well laid. This project failed, however, through the want of proper energy or attention on the part of General Cheatham, who, it is said, did not receive the lucid instructions of Hood, because he was absent from the camp, and therefore made no demonstration against Schofield's line, as he marched rapidly northward; but he was allowed to escape and intrench himself strongly at Franklin. There was still an apparent chance left for Hood to cut his line between Franklin and Nashville, but it soon melted into thin air, because Wilson's cavalry barred his way and guarded the line of retreat. By a rapid forced march at night Schofield passed the astonished Hood and took his place in front of Nashville, where Thomas had



been gathering his forces and strengthening his intrenchments.

Most battles have so much in common that their description becomes monotonous. Of its class and kind, however, the battle of Franklin was extraordinary, and evoked the unqualified admiration even of the gallant enemy.

The vigorous fighting at Franklin, especially that of Opdycke and Stanley, enabled the Union force to withdraw in good order to the intrenchments at Nashville. It chimed in with Thomas's larger plan. "The important result," says General Thomas, "of this signal victory [at Franklin] can not be too highly appreciated, for it not only seriously checked the enemy's advance and gave General Schofield time to move his troops and all his property to Nashville, but it also caused deep depression among the men of Hood's army. . . . Not willing to risk a renewal of the battle on the morrow, and having accomplished the object of the day's operations—viz., to cover the withdrawal of his trains—General Schofield, by my advice and direction, fell back during the night to Nashville." Doubtless this "advice and direction" were given because General Andrew

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\* The writer heard a lieutenant general of the Confederate army who was at Franklin, at a dinner of the Aztec Club, and in presence of General Schofield, declare that the fighting and the retreat at Franklin were among the most brilliant specimens of military skill and valor in the records of the war.

J. Smith could not reach Franklin in time to make its tenure certain.

Not diverted from his purpose, however, by his want of success at Franklin, Hood determined to move without a moment's delay upon Nashville—"to beard the lion in his den." He had given up almost entirely the hope of re-enforcements from Texas, while he constantly heard of accessions to the army of General Thomas. From day to day his task became more difficult; the disparity of numbers was disappearing, but he would still attempt its accomplishment.

If it be true that "those whom the gods wish to destroy they first render mad," it really seems that Hood was now inspired by a Berserker fury akin to madness, in venturing to attack an army composed in part of veteran troops, strongly intrenched, at least equal if not superior in numbers to his own, and with more to fight for than had been presented to any general in any battle of the war. Such prominence does Nashville assume at this juncture. Thomas was to be accused of being too slow, but the tremendous issues of the conflict demanded his caution. Hood, playing indeed for as desperate a stake, was certainly too fast. What he calls "the unfortunate affair at Spring Hill, the short duration of daylight at Franklin, and, finally and most important of all, the nonarrival of expected re-enforcements from the trans-Mississippi department of the Con-

federacy," should have warned him to pause and deliberate before arraying himself in front of the breastworks and guns of Nashville.

And thus we come to that partial siege and the great battle which was still, however, delayed by circumstances. Hood began to establish his line to the south of Nashville on the 2d of December, and there would either await Thomas's attack, which he was ready to meet with a *riposte*, or boldly assault the intrenchments, and endeavor to capture the town. In order to understand the subsequent movements we must now pause for a moment to take a view of the field of battle.

Nashville is situated on the south bank of the Cumberland River, and near the center of the town the Louisville and Nashville Railroad crosses the bridge, running southwest to Johnsonville. The railroads to Murfreesboro and to Franklin, respectively running southeast and south, both cross Brown's Creek, a small tributary emptying into the Cumberland east of the city. The principal turnpike roads from the Federal left to the right, by which Hood had arrived and which were of chief importance in the coming action, were the Lebanon road, the Murfreesboro pike, the Nolensville pike, the Franklin pike, the Granny White, the Hillsboro, the Hardin, and the Charlotte pikes. Thomas had established two lines of intrenchments, enveloping the city from river bank to river bank, and along these lines were

earthen redoubts, the principal of which were called Fort Gillem, Fort Donaldson, Fort Houston, Fort Casino, and Fort Martin. These were strong points in the line and supported each other. It had required time and industry to construct these; and the intervening lines had employed Thomas without a moment's rest until Hood arrived, and even after the Confederates had established themselves. Thomas was obliged to delay still longer, however, because Wilson's cavalry, which had joined him, was as yet to a great extent unmounted and destitute of equipments. Convalescent horses, and those gathered in a random way, were coming in but slowly. Thus, with a force including Steedman's command of five thousand men, consisting of detachments which had for a time been left behind at Chattanooga and which reached him December 1st, and A. J. Smith's corps from Missouri, he had an army which at the last numbered in all about fifty-two thousand infantry, to which the cavalry and quartermaster's men must be added; in all, from sixty-five thousand to seventy thousand. Hood's army, which was in position in front of Nashville on December 3d, was thus disposed around the city in the nature of an investment; Cheatham's corps was on his right, Lee's in the center, and Stewart's on the left. Montgomery Hill and Overton Hill are prominent irregular elevations of the Brentford range, which were occupied on December 4th, and fortified by the Confederates.

Thus posted, Hood awaited the sortie of Thomas with impatience; it would help to develop his own plans. On the same day (the 4th) Hood made a diversion away from this field by ordering an attack on Murfreesboro, without, however, dislodging its garrison; and also by an unsuccessful assault on a blockhouse erected on Overall Creek.

And now everything seemed in readiness in the Union army at Nashville. What was the cause of the further delay? Certainly it was more painful to Thomas than to any one else. He had expected to fight on December 7th; but he found his cavalry not in condition nor ready to move until the 9th, notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts to mount and equip them. Military men know how difficult it is to organize cavalry, and how impossible it is for an army to operate without cavalry. The task accomplished by Wilson in a few days was the ordinary labor of months.

Then, when everything was in readiness, there set in a storm of sleet and freezing weather which made it impossible for either army to move. The ground was a *verglas*, or sheet of ice, so slippery that men and horses could not stand. This state of things was not relieved, but continued for six days, until December 14th. The elements seemed to conspire against Thomas.

On the evening of that day Thomas called for his generals and gave them detailed instructions for the

next day. He informed them that at a given signal at six o'clock the next morning he would move out and attack the enemy according to these instructions, with such modifications as circumstances might render necessary.

Meanwhile there had been the greatest impatience at Washington. "Why does he not move?" The correspondence at this period, both in its impatience and its utter disregard of military propriety, forms a sad page in the history, and one of which its participants should have been greatly ashamed. They seemed to remain willfully ignorant of the improvised character of Thomas's force—the three corps from distinct military departments, and men drawn in small detachments from many organizations—scanty in numbers at first, and with a lack of cavalry, even for the ordinary needs of learning the enemy's positions and plans.

And now was heard from the Government authorities—the President, Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, and General Halleck, at Washington, and General Grant at City Point—such a jargon of grumbling, scolding voices, such howls of impatience, such vulgar innuendoes as never before beset a poor general, who knew his duty and was trying his utmost to do it, feeling sure, besides, that the fault-finders did not know anything about it. They were the blunderers, not Thomas.

"This looks," telegraphed Mr. Stanton, with a

fling at patriotic men who had only failed by reason of circumstances, "this looks like the McClellan and Rosecrans strategy of do nothing and let the enemy raid the country." Grant's opinion, less insulting but equally unreasonable, was that Thomas should attack at once, and, indeed, should have gone out and attacked immediately after the battle of Franklin. On December 6th he wrote: "Attack Hood at once, and wait no longer for a remount for your cavalry."

Thomas read this telegram to the army and corps commanders, requiring him to move. General Schofield and the rest sustained him in his decision to wait until he was ready; but the latter part of the telegram was not shown, which presented the alternative that he would be superseded if he did not move.

This is the more astonishing as General Grant knew as well as any man the absolute necessity of cavalry in such a conflict, especially to prevent Hood from passing around Nashville to invade Tennessee. And Wilson's splendid use of that arm when the time came thoroughly vindicates Thomas's judgment. With regard to his attacking Hood at or just after Franklin, Thomas had telegraphed from Nashville under date of December 2d: "I had at this place (Nashville) but about five thousand men of General A. J. Smith's command, which, added to the force under General Schofield, would not have given me more than twenty-five thousand men." It would

certainly have been madness to attempt such a thing at that time.

The following dispatch from Mr. Stanton to General Grant is a disgrace to military correspondence. Under date of December 7th he telegraphed: "Thomas seems to be unwilling to attack because it is hazardous. If he waits for Wilson to get ready, Gabriel will be blowing his last horn." To these and other urgent messages, which we are sure the reader will be glad to be spared, Thomas could only reply that he could not move sooner, notwithstanding his best efforts. On the 9th, the day when he was ready to move but for the storm of sleet and rain, the following general order was actually issued at Washington, but was suspended for a short time longer. The order was, "that Major-General Schofield relieve at once General G. H. Thomas in command of the Department and Army of the Cumberland." Several other generals were also proposed to supersede him. On the 13th an order was issued by General Grant from City Point, couched in these words: "Major-General John A. Logan . . . will proceed immediately to Nashville, Tennessee, reporting by telegraph to the lieutenant general his arrival at Louisville, and also at Nashville." What Logan was to do at Nashville was not an open secret. Unless by special assignment, had Logan gone to Nashville, Schofield, who ranked him, would still have been in command.



On the 15th, the very day of the battle, General Grant left City Point for Washington *en route* to Nashville, to take temporary command in person, and perhaps permanently supersede Thomas. It was then he heard of the first day's success, and returned to City Point.

On the 9th, Thomas had telegraphed to Halleck : "I feel conscious that I have done everything in my power to prepare, and that the troops could not have been gotten ready before this. If General Grant shall order me to be relieved, I will submit without a murmur. A terrible storm of freezing rain has come on since daylight, which will render an attack impossible till it breaks." Was ever man so beset ?

It is some alleviation of this treatment to feel reasonably sure that the great President Lincoln did not share these sentiments. In the *Life of Lincoln*, by Nicolay and Hay—which, as these gentlemen were near his person, may be considered as giving the President's views—we are pleased to find the following statement (X, 28) : "Thomas nowhere appears to greater advantage, not even on the hills of Chickamauga, opposing his indomitable spirit to the surging tide of disaster and defeat, than he does during this week, opposing his sense of duty to the will of his omnipotent superior, and refusing to move one hour before he thought the interests of the country permitted it, even under threat of removal and disgrace." And in the opinion of Gen-

erals Sherman, William F. Smith, James H. Wilson, and Robert N. Scott, he had at this time acquired a greater knowledge of strategy than any of the generals or officials by whom he was surrounded.

We need not multiply these dispatches and opinions. There are many more of them, and we find in the answers of Thomas the firm stand of an intelligent and well-informed will—of one man against the clamorous cabal of persons in authority hundreds of miles away, some of them in blissful ignorance of the first principles of the military art; like the war-horse, but with other purpose, “smelling the battle from afar.” A weaker man than Thomas would have yielded to the importunity and attacked before he was ready. Indeed, there seemed little discretion in the matter. He was ordered to attack at once. If he obeyed, the best interests of the country were endangered. If he did not, he was liable to the charge of “disobedience of orders.” The firmness of General Thomas, therefore, assumes the proportions of a martyr’s faith; he would die for the cause, for the honor of the profession of arms, and for his own spotless character, rather than obey the orders.

Comparisons are frequently odious, but sometimes necessary. Why did not the Administration, on several occasions of a lull in the war around Richmond, urge Grant with great insistency to hurry and take the Confederate capital? Simply because he had

the confidence of the Administration, and even Mr. Stanton did not dare to gainsay his words or actions. Grant, it is known, was a pushing and a tenacious man—so much so that on several occasions he sacrificed men to experiment. But still he went on, regardless of his partial failures. On the other hand, Thomas was cold, quiet, careful in his movements, a nice calculator of chances, but always intending to win all that could be won. The men were unlike, to some extent antagonistic, and Grant could not understand the steady and logical scheme of Thomas, who, from the time he left Sherman, had been collecting his scattered forces, and in the short period of two months had fully accomplished what he had purposed for the good of the country, while he had been stormed at and humiliated by the military authorities at Washington.

Among the splendid deeds of Thomas in our great war, I consider his masterly delay and his failure to obey urgent but vague, and what the French call “impossible,” orders at Nashville. If this be called negative merit, it demonstrated a powerful will, a greatness of soul, a tenacity of purpose, placing him in the immortal category of the Roman poet’s hero—*Justum et tenacem propositi virum*.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE AND RESULTS.

Union line—A. J. Smith—T. J. Wood—Steedman—Twenty-third Corps first in reserve, and then to extreme right—J. H. Wilson—The gunboats—Steedman's attack—Smith and Wilson dislodge the enemy—McArthur's brilliant charge—Second day—Thomas inspects the whole line—Wood's attacks—The right in concert—The enemy breaks—Pursuit—Hood retires from command—Changed tone of Washington dispatches—Thomas, Major-General, United States Army—Peace and reconstruction.

To the cool and philosophical mind of Thomas there was not the urgent necessity of haste thus ejaculated from Washington. Every day increased the danger to Hood, while it improved the condition of the Union army. Why take desperate chances while a reasonable delay would render the issue certain and successful? Nothing was lost, much was gained, by delay. We return now to the projected attack of Thomas on the morning of the 15th of December. By the 14th the ice had melted and the movement became feasible. The troops were in position at six o'clock in the morning, but were still further retarded by a dense mist, which did not clear off until about nine. The following was the forma-

tion, which had been communicated to the principal generals verbally, and also put in the form of an order of the day :

General A. J. Smith's corps, flanked and supported on the right by Hatch's division of Wilson's cavalry, which held ground from the Nolensville pike to the Cumberland River, formed the right ; General T. J. Wood, who had been in command of the Fourth Corps since Stanley was wounded, was in the center, across the Hillsboro pike ; and General Steedman's troops formed the extreme left of the Federal line. Admiral Lee, of the navy, directed the patrolling of the river above and below the city by gunboats under Lieutenant-Commander Leroy Fitch. General Schofield's Twenty-third Corps was at first held in reserve in rear of Smith and Wood, but was soon, however, to move through his line, and by a detour take post in front of Smith on his right. Hammond, with the First Brigade of Knipe's cavalry division, was temporarily detached to Galatin to watch and impede any attempts of Hood to cross the river in that direction. The troops in and immediately around the city of Nashville occupied the nearest intrenchments as they were vacated by the advancing columns.

There were during these six days of ice and sleet, which beset Hood as well as Thomas, grave doubts and speculations in Hood's camp. So complete were Thomas's preparations to receive him that he dared

not attempt a direct attack, and he began even to question his plan of going past Nashville into Kentucky. His further speculations were rendered unnecessary, however, by the shock of the Union attack, which was now imminent.

Concealed by the undulating nature of the ground, the Federal attack was made before Hood had any accurate knowledge of its intention. A demonstration was made by Steedman's troops against the Confederate right lying on Brown's Creek, beyond the Nolensville pike. This was of the nature of a feint, and had the desired effect, causing Hood to re-enforce his right in great haste. When this was accomplished, General Smith, with Wilson's cavalry, marched rapidly on the Hardin pike, and made a partial wheel to the left to confront the enemy's lines on the Hillsboro pike, at one point of which a heavy stone wall had been used by the Confederates as a rifle pit.

The enemy was struck and dislodged from this position, a portion of Smith's command and Wilson's cavalry dismounted, the latter leading, taking two redoubts, one after the other, with guns and prisoners. It was then that Thomas ordered Schofield, with the Twenty-third Corps, which had been in reserve, to take post on Smith's right to strengthen that flank, and permit Wilson, by giving him very prompt and vigorous support, to endeavor to strike the enemy's rear with his cavalry. Under these cir-

cumstances the Fourth Corps, under General Wood, with the Third, Second, and First Divisions in line from left to right, made a direct attack in front upon Montgomery Hill, the strong salient of Hood's position. This was entirely successful. It was now manifest to Hood that the purpose of Thomas was to turn his left flank. He had been driven out of his original line, and had fallen back to the base of Harpeth Hill, his line of retreat being still secure by the Granny White pike.

As the Twenty-third Corps had not yet fully organized for attack—and there was a consequent delay in its movements—General McArthur, commanding Smith's first division, asked permission to attack a salient point in front of Schofield's command. As there had been unexplained delay in the movements of the Twenty-third Corps, Thomas, who was in rear of the left center, rode rapidly to the right to learn the reason. When McArthur's request was preferred to him by A. J. Smith, he refused the permission, on the ground that it was due to the Twenty-third Corps to let it make the attack in its front. While he was talking to Schofield, McArthur, having received no answer to his request, took silence for consent, carried the point, drove back the enemy, and thus gave a rapid conclusion to the fortunes of the day, without the immediate co-operation of the Twenty-third. The efficiency of McArthur's charge by successive brigades—the front brigade being half-

way up the hill when the second and third were put in motion—with Wilson's dash with his dismounted cavalry, was recognized by Hood as a serious blow, the forerunner of imminent disaster soon to fall upon him. "Our line," he says, "thus pierced, gave way ; soon thereafter it broke at all points."

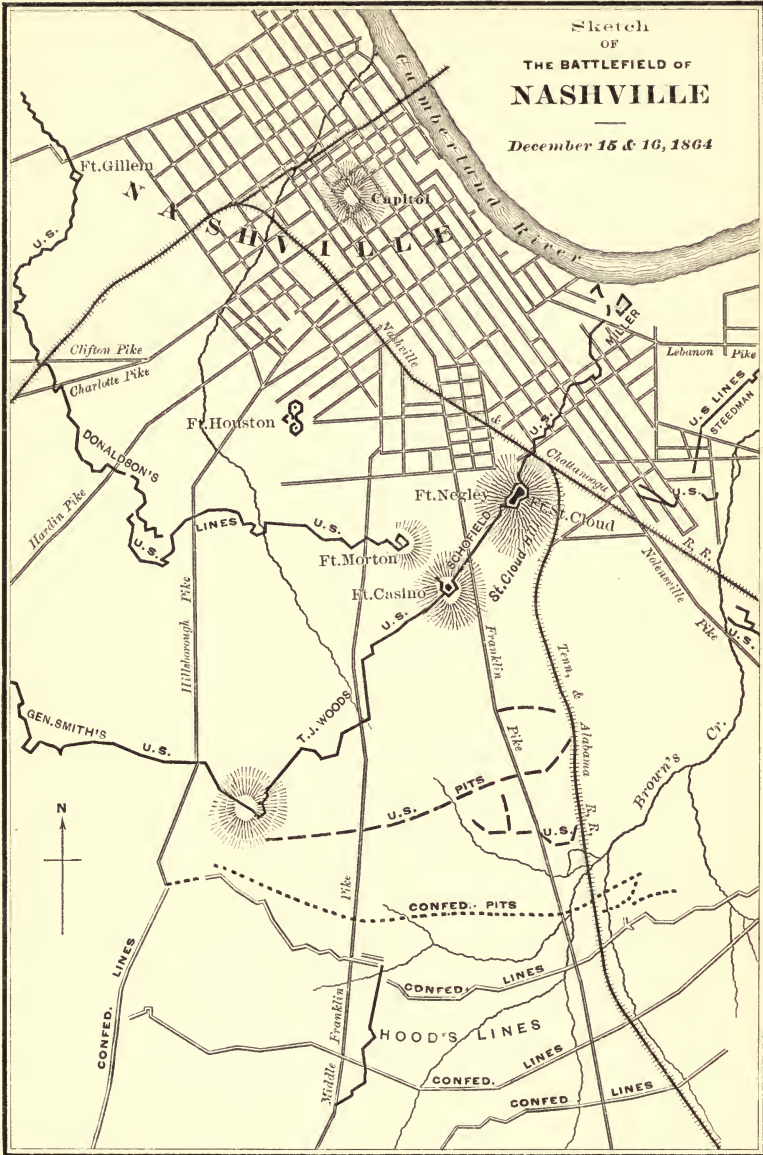
No advance of the infantry on the right was made until after three o'clock in the afternoon. Wilson's cavalry had been working on the left and rear of Hood's main line from ten o'clock until that hour, and after many urgent requests to Thomas to seize the opportune moment by the advance of the infantry, Wilson went in person and pointed out portions of his command entering the rebel works, and only needing re-enforcements to roll back and double up Hood's left. It was then that Thomas ordered Schofield to advance. But the work had been already done. This turning movement of the cavalry, enveloping the enemy's left and rear for a mile or more, drove Hood to seek safety for his communications by rapidly retiring.

The enemy attempted a *riposte*, but by this time General D. N. Couch, of Schofield's corps, threw forward one brigade after another and drove them back with great loss. When night fell the main body of Thomas's troops lay along the Hillsboro pike, almost at right angles to their original position, having crowded the left flank of the enemy back upon its center. The dismounted cavalry was placed in force



Sketch  
OF  
THE BATTLEFIELD OF  
**NASHVILLE**

December 15 & 16, 1864





upon the extreme right of the Union army on the Hillsboro pike. It was now manifest that Thomas would attempt to turn both flanks, or, by threatening their right, make the attack easier on the left.

Thus ended the first day of the battle of Nashville, Hood having been driven back to seek a new line at the Harpeth Hills, which he strongly intrenched during the night. That night Thomas telegraphed: "Attacked enemy's left this morning; drove it from the river below the city very nearly to Franklin pike—distance about eight miles." The good news spread on lightning wing throughout the country, North and South. This was not a moment too soon for Thomas's welfare, for Grant, having determined to supersede him, was, as we have seen, *en route* to carry out that purpose. While on his way he received the above dispatch, which so relieved his concern that he turned back, leaving General Thomas to complete his great victory.

It was a cold and dark December night that followed that first day of battle, and the troops of both armies spent it mainly in busy preparation for the next morning. The Union troops were elated by their success and confident for the morrow, while the Confederates had much to repair—indeed, to reorganize, and but little hope of carrying out their purpose. If they could neither beat Thomas nor flank him and go into Kentucky, they would at least retire with sullen dignity. Alas for them! They were

not to be permitted to do this. Then Hood's second thought, if he must abandon the plan of capturing Nashville, was to hold the line of Duck River, repair damages, and make ready for a new advance; but that was also to be impossible. The Union army was organized for advance, battle, and pursuit. He had not a moment's rest.

At an early hour on the 16th of December Thomas rode along the line, the order of which from left to right was Steedman, Wood, Smith, the Twenty-third Corps, drawn up in a semicircle concave to the enemy. The cavalry was on the left flank and rear of the enemy's position. To meet the new line of the Federal advance, Hood now withdrew Cheatham's corps from the extreme right to the left flank. This left the ground in front of Wood's Fourth Corps comparatively unoccupied; and so that general pushed forward, with General Steedman, to cover his left flank.

The Union army was thus in a very compact order—Schofield on the right toward the enemy's left flank and almost at right angles to Smith; Wood in contact with Smith, and Steedman on the left. A portion of Wilson's cavalry had now gained Hood's rear, across the Granny White pike. The enemy, during the night of the 15th, had occupied Overton's Hill and fortified it strongly; it constituted their right point, while their left was on the hills bordering the Granny White pike. The Union line was

now very close to the Confederates at all points. Early in the afternoon, and under cover of his batteries, after a reconnoissance by Colonel P. Sidney Post, General Wood ordered an assault upon the north slope of Overton's Hill with two brigades commanded by Colonel Post. The enemy, in expectation of this, had re-enforced that point; and the assailing party met with such a withering fire as they advanced that they were obliged to fall back and reform for a new attack. Colonel Post was severely wounded. Schofield and A. J. Smith then made the grandest diversion in his favor by a most vigorous attack in their fronts; they carried all the enemy's positions, drove him back pell-mell, captured all his artillery, took thousands of prisoners, among whom were four general officers, and all this with very little loss. The panic flight of the enemy's left was expedited by an attack of Wilson's dismounted men on his extreme left, which had already threatened to cut him off from his retreat. It was then that Hood sent word to General Chalmers "that unless they could be driven from his left and rear all was lost." By this time Wood was ready to renew his attack on Overton's Hill on their right, where the Confederates were still in great strength. He was received with a terrible fire, and for a time held in check; but nothing could resist the impetuosity of his charge. The enemy swarmed out of his intrenchments to the rear and fled in disorder, and, as soon

as their line broke, the Fourth Corps advanced at once in rapid pursuit of them. The supreme moment had now arrived. All the pikes were in requisition. Wilson's cavalry pursued along the Granny White pike, encountering the Confederate cavalry under Chalmers one mile in rear of the line of battle, which it scattered in every direction, and then continued the pursuit until midnight, making large captures. The Fourth Corps pressed forward by the Franklin road, in pursuit, as far as the Harpeth River, where, the bridges being destroyed, new ones were improvised. Hood crossed that stream on the 18th. The pursuit was then continued to Duck River, the cavalry pressing close upon their rear and bringing them frequently to bay; the line was promptly abandoned, and on the 27th the discomfited Confederates crossed the Tennessee and fell back as far as Tupelo, on the Mississippi. The last stand was made at Sugar Creek, and then the pursuit was also abandoned. This was on the 26th of December. It is difficult to estimate the enormous losses with accuracy. There were two thousand deserters, and to these must be added the large number who fell in the fierce battle.

We should not fail to notice the perfect symmetry of the battle of Nashville; the admirable dispositions of Thomas, leaving no weak point in the entire line; his constant supervision of all parts of the field; the splendid energy of his subordinates of

all grades, inspired with his spirit and fighting under his eye. A single partial repulse, magnificently reversed by a splendid charge; a pursuit on the morning of the third day, without a moment's delay; supplies, rations, ammunitions, everything being in readiness by reason of that admirable forecast and "delay" which was thus vindicated in the eyes of all at that time, and has passed into history in spite of the scoffs and cavils of the wirepullers at Washington. General Thomas says: "During the two days of the battle the Federal army took four thousand four hundred and sixty-two prisoners, two hundred and eighty-seven officers, including one major general and three brigadiers, fifty-three guns and twenty-five flags, and many thousand small arms, with a large number of wagons."

The enemy's losses in the two days' battle of Nashville were so great, and the means of calculating them so uncertain, that there can be no exact statement made. By an estimate of those scattering in all directions and by capture, there were thirteen thousand one hundred and eighty-nine, including seven generals, seventy-two guns, and seventy standards. Those of Thomas were three thousand and fifty-seven, all told, at Nashville, and in the whole campaign, from the time that he cut loose from Sherman, not more than ten thousand.

Thomas intended to put his army into winter quarters—"for lack of argument"; they had noth-

ing to oppose them. The Fourth Corps took post at Huntsville and Athens, the Twenty-third at Dalton; A. J. Smith's force went to Eastport, and Wilson's cavalry were at Huntsville, and moved thence to Eastport and Gravelly Springs. But this arrangement was not agreed to by General Grant. That general was guarded in his congratulations on the great victory, but retained his opinion that Thomas had been too slow before the battle. He therefore was indisposed to give Thomas much power for the future, but employed his forces in various partial expeditions under subordinate commanders. The truth remains, however, that up to that time Nashville was the only battle of the war, except perhaps the Vicksburg campaign, in which the Union army had defeated, dissipated, routed, and destroyed a Confederate army in logical sequence from the beginning to the end.

After the battle and the pursuit Hood had his headquarters for a few days at Tuscumbia, and during January his infantry was rallying at Tupelo. Forrest was in command of all the cavalry, and for his dashing movements he was created, on February 24th, a lieutenant general. It proved a barren honor. At Tupelo, a broken man in health and spirits, Hood retired from the command, turning it over to General Dick Taylor on January 23d. Hood was an honest man, and has written, in admirable tone, a volume called *Advance and Retreat*, in his



own vindication. Much of it is controversial as to his relations to J. E. Johnston. In it he is frank enough to say: "Our line, thus pierced (by the Federal charge), gave way; soon thereafter it broke at all points, and I beheld for the first and only time a Confederate army abandon the field in confusion." Detailing the difficulties which had beset him, he assumed the entire responsibility for the defeat, and left the command of the army just before the entire dissolution of the Confederacy, which was even now imminent. From first to last Hood's greatest want was men and weight in his columns.

We have seen how at the first the vexed question of loyalty to the Union presented itself to the minds of all men of Southern birth in the army when the war broke out; how many excellent and honorable men, like Lee and Stonewall Jackson, were swept into the Confederate ranks by the whirlwind of passion, and the consequent storm of public opinion in the States seceded from the Union. Such temptations must undoubtedly have presented themselves to the mind of Thomas, and we have seen how he nobly settled the matter in favor of our whole country. We give greater praise to his conduct, or rather we are the more thankful for his loyalty, when we see how in several great emergencies he may be said to have saved the country. The victory of Nashville had a magnificent correlation to other great designs and events. It utterly destroyed Hood's army as an

effective whole, so that it was of little further service whatever to the Confederacy, while it left the South at the mercy of the Union troops. It inaugurated "the beginning of the end." It left but one considerable Confederate army in the entire field, which, so closely was it beleaguered in and around Richmond, it was manifest must soon lay down its arms. In so doing it prevented a Northern invasion, which might have prolonged the war. It chimed with Sherman's successful expectation, which captured Savannah, and it led to the capitulation of Johnston in North Carolina. It dashed the last hopes of Lee in Virginia, and hastened the surrender at Appomattox Court House. In a word, it stands alone as a unique, thorough, magnificent, and far-reaching victory, achieved by the skill and firmness of one man, who had acquired the confidence of his officers and men, so that they fought for him as well as for the cause. Among the many actual defeats or drawn battles which the Union army had suffered, and the humiliation of which was emphasized and contrasted with the success at Nashville, it stands without a rival.

Had Thomas fought at Franklin, unprepared as he was, and met with only partial success, the struggle would have been prolonged; the enemy would have had time to recruit, and perhaps be re-enforced. We contend that the plan of fighting at Nashville, and when ready, was the best; at least it settled the question at one vigorous blow. One other thought

may be permitted in this connection. Let us suppose that the decision of Thomas, at the breaking out of the war, had been otherwise; that he had espoused the Confederate cause; that he had *attacked* instead of *defending* the fearful position at Chickamauga; that *he*, instead of *Hood*, had conducted the Confederate campaign into Tennessee. The results, we may readily conceive, would have been widely and disastrously different. Thus it is not by what he accomplished alone, but by what might have reasonably been, in case of his defection, that his character as a man and a patriot and his skill as a general shine with double luster. It was well that the last important action of his military life should have such significance as this; that he was commander in chief, and without interferences, once at least; that by this signal victory, all his own, he should manifest his greatness, and set the seal to his splendid and consistent career. Providence had been good to him in this respect.

It will throw further light upon this great battle if we present a part of the General Order No. 169, issued by General Thomas to his army, and dated—

“PULASKI, *December 29, 1864.*

“SOLDIERS: The major general commanding announces to you that the rear guard of the flying and dispirited enemy was driven across the Tennessee River on the night of the 27th instant. The impassable state of the roads, and consequent impossi-

bility to supply the army, compels a closing of the campaign for the present.

“Although short, it has been brilliant in its achievements, and unsurpassed in its results by any other of this war, and is one of which all who participated therein may be justly proud. That veteran army which, though driven from position to position, opposed a stubborn resistance to much superior numbers during the whole of the Atlanta campaign, taking advantage of the absence of the largest portion of the army which had been opposed to it in Georgia, invaded Tennessee, buoyant with hope, expecting Nashville, Murfreesboro, and the whole of Tennessee and Kentucky to fall into its power an easy prey, and scarcely fixing a limit to its conquests. After having received at Franklin the most terrible check that army has met with during this war, and later at Murfreesboro, in its attempt to capture that place, it was finally attacked at Nashville, and, although your forces were inferior to it in numbers, was hurled back from the coveted prize on which it had been permitted to look from a distance, and finally sent flying, dismayed and disordered, whence it came, impelled by the instinct of self-preservation, and thinking only how it could relieve itself for short intervals from your persistent and harassing pursuit, by burning the bridges over the swollen streams as it passed them, until finally it had placed the broad waters of the Tennessee River between you and its shattered, diminished, and discomfited columns, leaving its artillery and battle-flags in your victorious hands—lasting trophies of your noble daring, and lasting monuments of the enemy’s disgrace and defeat.

“You have diminished the forces of the rebel army since it crossed the Tennessee River to invade the State, at the least estimate, fifteen thousand men, among whom were killed, wounded, and captured, eighteen general officers.

“Your captures from the enemy, as far as reported, amount to sixty-eight pieces of artillery, ten thousand prisoners, as many of small arms—several thousand of which have been gathered in, and the remainder strew the route of the enemy’s retreat—and between thirty and forty flags, besides compelling him to destroy much ammunition and abandon many wagons.”

To this may be added some extracts from General Thomas’s report of the battle :

“On the morning of the 15th of December, the weather being favorable, the army was formed and ready at an early hour to carry out the plan of battle promulgated in the special field orders of the 14th. The formation of troops was partially concealed from the enemy by the broken nature of the ground, as also by a fog, which lifted toward noon. . . .

“Finding General Smith had not taken as much distance to the right as I had expected he would have done, I directed General Schofield to move his command (the Twenty-third Corps) from position in reserve, to which it had been assigned, over the right of General Smith, enabling the cavalry thereby to operate more freely to the enemy’s rear. This was rapidly accomplished by Schofield, and his troops participated in the closing operations of the day.

“Our line at nightfall was readjusted, running

parallel to and east of the Hillsboro pike—Schofield's command on the right, Smith's in the center, and Wood's on the left, with Wilson's cavalry on the right of Schofield; Steedman held the position he had gained early in the morning. The total result of the day's operations was the capture of sixteen pieces of artillery and twelve hundred prisoners, besides several hundred stands of small arms and about forty wagons. The enemy had been forced back at all points with heavy loss. Our casualties were unusually light. The behavior of the troops was unsurpassed for steadiness and alacrity in every movement, and the original plan of battle, with but few alterations, was strictly adhered to. The whole command bivouacked in the line of battle during the night on the ground occupied at dark, while preparations were made to renew the battle at an early hour on the morrow.

“Immediately following the effort of the Fourth Corps, Generals Smith's and Schofield's commands moved against the enemy's works in their respective fronts, carrying all before them, irreparably breaking his lines in a dozen places, and capturing all his artillery and thousands of prisoners—among the latter four general officers. Our loss was remarkably small—scarcely mentionable. All of the enemy that did escape were pursued over the tops of Brentwood and Harpeth Hills. General Wilson's cavalry dismounted, attacked the enemy simultaneously with Schofield and Smith, striking him in reverse, and, gaining firm possession of Granny White pike, cut off his retreat by that route. Wood's and Steedman's troops, hearing the shouts of victory coming from the right, rushed impetuously forward, renew-

ing the assault on Overton's Hill ; and although meeting a very heavy fire, the onset was irresistible, artillery and many prisoners falling into our hands. The enemy, hopelessly broken, fled in confusion through Brentwood Pass, the Fourth Corps in close pursuit, which was continued for several miles, when darkness closed the scene and the troops rested from their labors. A portion of Wilson's cavalry continued the pursuit till midnight. During the two days' operations there were four thousand four hundred and sixty-two prisoners captured, including two hundred and eighty-seven officers, of all grades from that of major general, fifty-three pieces of artillery, and thousands of small arms. The enemy abandoned on the field all of his dead and wounded."

The pursuit was for a short time delayed by a slight blunder in sending forward the pontoon train. A staff officer in directing it wrote by mistake that it was to proceed by the Murfreesboro pike instead of the Nolensville pike, and it had already traveled two miles before the mistake was corrected.

It is always fortunate for the military biographer when he can find his criticisms in the very words of the general himself. Thomas was very reticent with regard to the conduct of others, but did not spare himself. In a familiar lecture on the battle of Nashville, which he delivered before a scientific club in Washington and which was said to be a model of clearness and vivid description, he pointed out what he called a grave error of judgment, which was in not sending at the close of the first day a strong

force round to the rear of the enemy to cut off his retreat and capture his entire army. He was the more magnanimous in stating his fault, because, after such brilliant results had been achieved, few, if any, would have dared to advance such a criticism. Knowing the field so thoroughly as he did, he was perhaps not prepared for that panic rout into which the enemy was driven, and which so thoroughly surprised Hood himself. Just before the break it was the Confederate purpose to attack that very right flank with which Thomas would have made the movement, and which Hood declared to be in air.

The history of the Nashville campaign is indeed a triumphant vindication of the policy and conduct of Thomas. No further or other answer is needed to the antecedent criticisms from Washington. He could not have left Nashville to fight at Franklin with any propriety, even if A. J. Smith had arrived in time. Everything there was in a heterogeneous condition. Old troops leaving, new troops and recruits coming in from many directions; an army as yet unorganized, a large portion of the cavalry without horses, he was absolutely needed at that point, and every moment of his time was employed in an organization and assignment of positions and commands, and getting in readiness for the supreme moment which he knew must soon arrive. It is passing strange that this was not clear to General Grant and the authorities at Washington.



*Results of the Battle of Nashville.*—There was a great revolution of sentiment at Washington. As soon as the victory was assured, all those who had been assailing him with impatient remonstrances and almost abusive urgency had suddenly changed their note, and were as full of panegyric as they had been of reproach. Lincoln wrote: "Please accept for yourself, officers, and men, the nation's thanks for your work of yesterday. You made a magnificent beginning; a grand consummation is within your easy reach."

Secretary Stanton would hardly be recognized in the following dispatch, sent after the result of the first day:

"I rejoice in tendering to you and the gallant officers and soldiers of your command the thanks of this department for the brilliant achievement of this day, and hope that it is the harbinger of a decisive victory that will crown you and your army with honor, and do much toward closing the war. We shall give you a hundred guns in the morning.

(Signed)

"E. M. STANTON,

*"Secretary of War."*

But Thomas was in no humor for accepting this flattering unction. We may anticipate by saying that the Secretary's former unkind dispatches had made such an enduring impression upon General Thomas,

that when they afterward met in Washington, and the Secretary told him, "I have always had great confidence in you," the words were so in contrast to his former actions that Thomas answered: "Mr. Stanton, I am sorry to hear you make this statement. I have not been treated as if you had confidence in me."

General Grant, while praising him for his victory, was still of the opinion, however, that he had been slow, and that he might have fought and driven back the enemy before he reached Franklin—an opinion in which he has not been supported by the just judgment of the best military critics. In speaking, on the 15th of January, of the chance that Beauregard would collect the fragments of Hood's army and go against Sherman, Grant says: "If this be the case, Selma and Montgomery can easily be reached. I do not believe, though, that General Thomas will get there from the North; he is too ponderous in his preparations and equipments to move through a country rapidly enough to live off of it." This was severe criticism, and deeply did Thomas feel it. He had never failed, he had never been beaten, but his ponderous blows had saved the army when many of the rapid generals had used their fleetness in the wrong direction.

All things were now conspiring against the Confederacy and converging to a crisis. It was a foregone conclusion that it was a "lost cause."

Sherman, in his march to the sea, had demonstrated their weakness in that whole region, and was now moving through the Atlantic States against J. E. Johnston, who had been again—for lack of an abler man who could not be found—reluctantly placed in command. Thomas had disintegrated the army of Hood. Lee was holding on in front of Richmond with a grip which was very rapidly being relaxed. All the Union armies were closing together or in close relations, and it was manifest that the end was very near. Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, was about to be captured at Irvinsville while escaping in disguise.

As will be seen by Thomas's order after the battle, it was his purpose to occupy commanding points in the enemy's territory and let his army rest; but this was not to be, nor can we think it, on the whole, the wisest course. On December 31st Halleck telegraphed him: "Lieutenant-General Grant does not intend that your army should go into winter quarters; it must be ready for active operations in the field." General A. J. Smith, who had taken his corps to Eastport, whither Wilson had also gone with his cavalry, was then put under the orders of General Canby, at New Orleans. Schofield was sent with the Twenty-third without delay to join Sherman in his upward march through North Carolina. What remained of Hood's force was divided: Cheatham and S. P. Lee marching through Selma

and Montgomery to harass General Sherman in rear and flank, while the remnant joined General Richard Taylor at Meridian, and took no part in the later movements.

Whatever was the judgment of his superiors, the country at large now accepted Thomas as a model chieftain. On the 24th of December, 1864, the President nominated him as a major general in the army, a distinction which he himself thought he had deserved much earlier. "I suppose," he said to a friend, "it is better late than never, but it is too late to be appreciated ; I earned this at Chickamauga"—and indeed he had.

"There is one thing," he said on another occasion, "about my promotions that is exceedingly gratifying: I never received a promotion they dared to withhold. After Chickamauga they could not refuse a commission as brigadier general in the United States army, and after Nashville a major general's commission."

On the 3d of March, 1865, by a joint resolution of the two Houses, Congress voted its thanks to General Thomas, his officers and men, for the victory at Nashville. On the 2d of November a similar resolution was passed by the General Assembly of Tennessee, and a gold medal was presented to him in commemoration of the event.

We may pass over the remaining events of the war with the mere mention of the proposed move-

ment of Canby into Alabama; the cavalry movements of Wilson upon Selma and the Southern capital, Montgomery; and Stoneman into Virginia and western North Carolina—all to chime with Sheridan's movement upon Lynchburg in February, 1865.

The main features of Stoneman's very brilliant expedition were as follows: It was under orders from General Grant to Thomas that Stoneman was directed to move with a force of cavalry ten thousand strong with the utmost celerity into North Carolina and southern Virginia, to make a diversion in favor of Sherman's march in that part of these States beyond his reach. By the 24th of March he had reached Jonesboro, marching without impedimenta; on the 27th he was at the Watauga River; thence over the Blue Ridge he marched to Salem, Virginia. He divided his force for separate raids, reuniting again when the special work was done; and he made such wholesale destruction as belittles former similar achievements; supplies of corn, rice, and other provisions, guns, small arms, powder, magazines, stations and depots, long lines of railroads, bridges, etc., were destroyed; the Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, that grand artery, was cut at many points; many wagon trains and more than six thousand prisoners were captured. He was moving on toward Lynchburg, the object of Sheridan's raid from the East; from Salisbury he had proceeded as far as Asheville; there he received the news of Sher-

man's armistice, which put an end to his expedition. Stoneman met with but little opposition, but did incredible injury to the enemy's territory and war material.

We turn to the other and far the more consequential expedition—that of Wilson. Space is lacking to give details. As Canby was desired to take Mobile, the first purpose of Grant was that General Wilson should simply co-operate with him; to this end he was to capture Selma or Montgomery, or both, if possible.

Wilson, a general by intuition and a dashing cavalryman, wanted a little larger scope, and this, with Grant's sanction, Thomas granted him. If he could do what was asked of him, or rather what he proposed, he might go farther and do more. The expedition traveled light, but had a canvas pontoon train of thirty boats, and provisions for forty days. Taking only three divisions, because he required the horses of the fourth to remount these, he crossed the river on the 18th of March, and started on the 22d from Chickasaw with twelve thousand mounted men and fifteen hundred unmounted, through a country so denuded of supplies that he was obliged to divide his force, in order, while still within supporting distance, to subsist his troops. Thus separating and uniting, he converged upon Selma.

On April 1st the main body was at Plantersville. Selma, an important manufacturing town, is situated

on the north bank of the Alabama River, one hundred and fifty miles above Mobile, and is one hundred feet above the mean water level; it seemed to be adequately defended by Forrest with three brigades of Confederate cavalry and a force of infantry and militia. The assault upon the town was gallantly made by General Long, who was wounded, and it was taken. It is recorded that where the way of the assailants was barred by stockades the men in the rear ran, and, jumping upon the backs of the advanced men, crossed the stockade and entered the inclosure by a "leap-frog" movement. Forrest requested an interview with Wilson at Catawba, on April 6th, to effect an exchange of prisoners, without result. Selma was almost entirely destroyed, with large stores of every kind. The captures included thirty-one field-pieces, one thirty-pounder, two thousand seven hundred prisoners, three thousand horses (very much needed by Wilson for remounts), and a large quantity of stores of all kinds.

On the 10th of April, in the exercise of his roving commission, Wilson crossed the river and moved upon Montgomery, the first Confederate capital, being sure that Mobile was already upon Canby's list of conquests. Montgomery surrendered on the 12th, and there again the material supports of the Confederacy were destroyed. Nearly one hundred thousand bales of cotton were burned; steamboats,

locomotives, and foundries were captured and ruined. Thence a detachment moved on West Point, while the main part of the cavalry marched to Columbus, Georgia, on the east bank of the Chattahoochee, where there was more wholesale destruction, including the ram Jackson. Still further unrelenting, the force proceeded to Macon, which it reached on April 21st. There Wilson heard of the armistice between Johnston and Sherman, but as it did not come through what he regarded as a reliable source, he discredited it, and captured the city with its garrison, including Generals Howell Cobb, G. W. Smith, and Mackall. On the 21st of April a dispatch from Sherman came through General Thomas announcing the truth, and ordering him to desist from further hostilities.

This separate expeditionary campaign of Wilson deserves a fuller record ; but the statistics given are sufficient to impress the reader with its great merit and its potent influence in bringing about the close of the war. It has a remarkable correlation with all the great events of the period. Sherman's march through Georgia had disclosed the rapidly failing strength of the Confederacy in men, money, munitions, and supplies. The brilliant campaign of Nashville under Thomas had disintegrated their last considerable army, except that of Lee, in the entire field. The bold, independent advance of Wilson ; his fierce and successive assaults of fortified places ; the



relentless following up of success ; the capture of the "last ditch" at Macon, and the arrest of the Confederate President in disguise, declared that the Confederacy had really ceased to exist, needing only the formal surrender at Appomattox Court House to announce the fact to the expectant world.

Then came in speedy succession the grand return march of General Sherman from Savannah to re-enforce the Federal army in front of Richmond ; the close of the war by the surrender of Lee at Appomattox Court House ; the armistice of Sherman with Johnston's troops, and the great controversy thereby excited ; and, finally, the capture of Jefferson Davis by Wilson's cavalry troops near Irwinsville, Georgia, on the 11th of May. With all these Thomas had only indirect connection and no immediate command, and they are treated of in other of these biographies.

At the close of the war Thomas was the junior of six major generals in the Union army.\* He had on the 17th of January, 1865, been assigned by the President to the command of the territory occupied by the troops of the departments of the Ohio and the Cumberland. When the surrender of Johnston was announced on the 29th of April, he attempted at

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\* Up to and including the rank of colonel in the army the promotion is lineal. *Generals* of every grade are nominated by the President without regard to their lineal rank. He may nominate a lieutenant to be a general. The assignment to a desired command is generally regarded the privilege of relative rank.

once to introduce social order into that region. By an order from Washington on the 7th of June the Military Division of the Tennessee was created, and he was assigned to the command. It consisted of the five departments of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.

It would be unnecessary and unprofitable to dwell upon the part taken by Thomas in the reconstruction and restoration of the seceded States. While his Southern birth and education may seem to have given him a better knowledge of the people and their needs, and while his honesty assured that his purpose would be carried out without fear or prejudice, he himself seemed to think, and no doubt justly, that his efforts in that direction would not be acceptable to the Southern people, who still looked with some bitterness upon what they considered his defection from their cause. It was due to this that he declined the detail to New Orleans, and his mind underwent certain changes of purpose from the time when he left the Department of the Cumberland to assume command of the Military Division of the Tennessee. This was June 22, 1865.

In the beginning of 1866 he testified before the reconstruction committee in favor of having representatives in Congress from Tennessee, of restricting the use of United States troops to service when requested by the governors of States, of keeping troops in the departments "both for their moral

effect upon the lawless portion of the community, and for assistance to the civil authorities when required." He adds, "I can not but admit they are of little use where the officers of the civil law do not perform their duties." He recognizes and reports the various organizations in the South hostile to the Government which impeded the progress of peace and quiet; and yet at the same time he says there is evidence "that the mass of the people were very happy at the downfall of the rebellion and at the prospect of soon getting again under the Constitution and Government of the United States." But no one recognized more fully the fact that after so terrible a struggle there must be after-waves, and that, while promptness and firmness were necessary in dealing with the embittered inhabitants, every effort should be made by kindness and tact to win them back to their allegiance. The wise policy and temperate justice of General Thomas, combined with firmness, were shown when the rebellion was in its last stages, by his action with regard to the Bishop of Alabama, in dealing with which he acted with prudence, firmness, and generosity. When the sergeant-at-arms of the Tennessee Legislature asked for the aid of Federal soldiers to punish refractory members, Thomas applied to the War Department for instructions, and, according to those instructions, he declined to interfere in the doings of the State Legislature.

On the 12th of June, 1865, the General Assembly of Tennessee adopted resolutions expressing their sincere pleasure at the appointment of General Thomas to command the Military Division of the Tennessee. They speak of him as the model soldier. They hoped for early peace and quiet, and Unionism to prevail by reason of his appointment. They thanked the President and the War Department for assigning him to them, and they adopted him as a citizen of Tennessee. On the 25th of August, 1866, the Legislature of Tennessee passed a resolution to purchase a life-size portrait of General Thomas, to be placed in the Capitol.

Rapid changes were made in the constitution and territory of his division, and he was, by order, on the 26th of August, 1867, and at his own request, placed in command of the Department of the Cumberland, comprising Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia, with his headquarters at Louisville. On the 21st of February, 1868, President Johnson nominated him to the United States Senate for the brevets of lieutenant general and general. At that time Johnson was in the midst of his imbroglio with the authorities at Washington, which led to his impeachment, and it is probable that these nominations were intended to precede a blow at General Grant; but that was not the ground upon which Thomas declined them. "I have done," he said, "no service since the war to deserve so high a compliment, and

it is now too late to be regarded as a compliment if conferred for services during the war."

Efforts were also made at that time to make him a candidate for the presidency of the United States. Had he become so, there is little doubt that he would have swept the country. We can not better present his views on the subject than in a few words taken from letters written in answer to such a request. In one he says: "I have too much regard for my own self-respect to voluntarily place myself in a position where my personal and private character can be assailed with impunity by newspaper men and scurrilous political pettifoggers and demagogues."

On the 8th of March, 1870, when the question was again mooted, he writes: "My services are now, as they have always been, subject to the call of the Government in whatever military capacity I may be considered competent and worthy to fill, and will be cordially undertaken whenever called upon to render them. All civil honors and duties I shall continue to decline."

As to further promotion, it was natural that Hancock, Meade, and Thomas might each have hoped to be appointed lieutenant general after Sherman; but Sheridan had equal claims and a very popular record, and that question was set at rest by his appointment. When he died, all these distinguished generals had preceded him into "the silent land."

It has not been considered necessary to dwell

upon the subject of his later appointments to command, complicated sometimes by the questions of seniority, character of former services, etc. Through the kindness of Major W. H. Lambert the following letter, now first printed, opens to the reader a glimpse of the feeling of Thomas when the question of assigning him to the command in New Orleans was first considered. While he manfully gives his own reason for declining the assignment, his friends really think that the germs of the disorder which carried him off were already in his system, and that he had great reason for the utmost care, although he did not appear to think so.

[COPY.]

“LOUISVILLE, KY., *September 7, 1867.*

“DEAR COLONEL: . . . I wish to remove any impression which may have been made on your mind regarding the state of my health. Early in the summer Dr. Hassen, at my request, gave me medicine as an alterative after I had described to him a peculiar sensation which I had in my right side. It was disagreeable, and that is all that can be said of it; but the doctor thought that unless I took blue mass, to restore a healthy action of the liver, I might eventually be attacked with some disease of the liver that would be very disagreeable if not lead to worse consequences. The medicine had given me great relief, but in the course of time I had to go to

West Virginia on official business, that State being now a part of my command. It so happened that while on that trip the President issued his order for me to relieve Sheridan. I have heard that Dr. Hassen, as soon as the order reached him, telegraphed to the adjutant general that he did not think it right to send me to New Orleans in the yellow fever season, because of what he knew of my condition. I heard of the order in Lewisburg, West Virginia, and immediately protested to General Grant against going to New Orleans, not on the score of health or because the yellow fever was in New Orleans, but because of the hostility of the people toward me, making it impossible for me to be of any service in endeavoring to reconstruct the Southern States. In fact, I made the same protest against going to New Orleans that I did last May against taking command of the Third Military District. I presume, to ease off the withdrawal of the order, it was stated that, owing to the unfavorable condition of my health, as reported by the Medical Director of the Department of the Cumberland, I was released from the operation of General Order No. 77, and Hancock was detailed to assume command of the Fifth Military District after being relieved by Sheridan. . . .

Yours truly,

(Signed)

"GEORGE H. THOMAS.

"Colonel R. A. RAMSEY, Pottsville, Pa."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LAST SERVICES AND DEATH.

Eastern military division given to Meade—Thomas goes to the Pacific—Health undermined—Death at San Francisco, 1870—Apoplexy—Died in harness—Body taken to Troy, N. Y.—General sorrow—Committee of Congress—Pall-bearers—Monuments—Unveiling of the equestrian statue at Washington—Men of all politics join—Summary of his character—High honor—Independence—Refusal of gifts—Self-sacrifice—His sensitiveness—Both strategist and tactician—Controversies dying out—His ever-increasing reputation.

AFTER the war General Thomas was long desirous to have command of the Eastern Division of the army; but as it had been promised to General Meade, who ranked him as a major general by four months, he accepted the command of the Military Division of the Pacific, and reached San Francisco on the 1st of June, 1869.

It is said that the order assigning Schofield to that division had been actually written, but that Schofield declined it in favor of Thomas. On the point of etiquette, however, it should also be said that Thomas claimed that assignment as his right. With characteristic system and energy he made a thorough inspection of all the posts in the entire



territory of his command, but his labors were approaching their end, and that a sudden one. He was to be one of a large number of distinguished generals who, by reason of their hard lives during the war, carried latent within them the seeds of premature death, although they presented the appearance of general health and vigor.

On the 28th of March, 1870, he had gone to his office in San Francisco, and was sitting in his private room, when, shortly after one o'clock, his aid-de-camp, Colonel Kellogg, was preparing to go in to obtain his signature to certain papers. All the other officers having left the building for luncheon, General Thomas opened the door of the inner office, and, falling outward, became unconscious. Calling a messenger to aid him, Colonel Kellogg loosened his clothing, and then placed him upon a sofa, throwing the doors and windows open for air. The day was murky and disagreeable. The army surgeons were sent for—Drs. Murray and McCormick—but by reason of a delay in finding them, a young physician who was nearer was called in. Slight but temporary relief was given by the remedies administered, and the general returned for a few minutes to consciousness. Mrs. Thomas was prepared for the sad news of his illness, and joined him in his office before he died.

The last paper issuing from his pen was an answer to a letter in the New York Tribune of March



12, 1870, unjust in the extreme, and which had given him great pain. It was severely criticising the Nashville campaign in the interests of Schofield. The closing words which he had written were blurred and somewhat incoherent. The abrupt close of the paper reads thus: "The necessity existing until the army fell back to Nashville gave Schofield the opportunity to fight the battle of Franklin. This was a very brilliant battle, most disastrous to the enemy, and, as the writer in the Tribune says, no doubt materially contributed to the crowning success at Nashville." Then follow the blurred and disconnected lines attempted while he was suddenly struck by the hand of death.

Soon relapsing into unconsciousness, he died shortly after seven o'clock that evening. An autopsy made the next day determined the cause to be apoplexy. Two arteries near the heart had been somewhat ossified, and were found broken. "He literally died," says his aid-de-camp, "in harness." His death occurred and he was laid out in the office where he had worked, and he was carried thence to the Lick House, where he had lived and where the funeral services were held.

Thence by rail his body was taken across the Continent, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, to the family lot at Troy, on the Hudson. There his remains arrived in charge of his personal staff on the 7th of April, 1870. It may be said that they crossed

the Continent amid the mourning and high panegyric of every State they passed through. Taken at once from the station to St. Paul's Church, they were visited by thousands, among whom were the President of the United States, with members of his Cabinet and other high functionaries from all parts of the land. General Thomas had died on the 28th of March. On the 30th a joint resolution was passed by Congress declaring the national sorrow for his loss. At a meeting held in the hall of the House of Representatives a committee of thirteen—six senators and seven representatives—was appointed to attend the funeral.

The public buildings and many others were covered with funeral emblems. The pallbearers were his most distinguished comrades of the war—Generals Meade, Rosecrans, Schofield, Hazen, Granger, Newton, McKay, and Hooker. The funeral services were conducted by William C. Doane, D. D., Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Albany, and the remains of the splendid soldier and model man were deposited in the funeral vault, in waiting for a more blessed immortality. The monument marking the spot Mrs. Thomas\* preferred to erect herself in Oakwood Cemetery; it is a sarcophagus, on which are inscribed the dates of his birth and death, and on the

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\* This estimable lady, who made her residence in Washington city, followed her husband to the grave on December 26, 1890. She was found dead in her bed.

top a granite eagle holding a model of the sword with which he achieved his great renown.

*Honors to his Memory.*—At the time of his death General Thomas was the President of the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, which had been founded in February, 1868.\* His inaugural speech at Cincinnati was an admirable exposition of his character, and a fine opening for the Society, which exists still in pristine vigor. At their first meeting after his decease, among other resolutions, the following was passed: "That some fitting monument should be erected by his countrymen to mark the spot where the remains of our beloved commander rest, and that this Society shall take the initiatory steps for its erection. And to that end a committee of one from each State represented in this Society be now appointed to arrange some method to procure the necessary funds, and to provide a design, specifications, and estimates therefor, and to report at the next meeting." As has been seen, the spot in Oakwood Cemetery, at Troy, was marked by the monument provided by Mrs. Thomas. An equestrian statue was proposed. Congress appropriated captured brass guns, and the statue was

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\* The badge of the army, which had been formally adopted on June 19, 1865, at Nashville, was a five-pointed star, in the center of which was a triangle inclosing an acorn; the ribbon is red, white, and blue, and on the pin is engraved "The Army of the Cumberland."

made by J. Q. A. Ward. It is one of the most successful of the statues of our great soldiers.

The committee, which had been further appointed on the statue to be erected at Washington, met from time to time, but nearly ten years had elapsed before they reported that the statue had been cast and accepted, and the Society in large numbers were ready to unveil it on the 20th of November, 1879. The time chosen was the eleventh annual convention of the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, and it brought together a great number of his former comrades of the society and representatives of sister societies. There was a general interest, confined to no party or military class. Letters from Generals Grant and Sheridan and other most distinguished military men and statesmen, who were prevented from attending in person, were read. It was far more than the ordinary *nil nisi bonum*. The memory of his worthy deeds and august virtues was still abroad throughout the country, and there was a general concurrence of high honor to his memory. One distinguishing mark of the correspondence was the eminent appreciation of Thomas by the old Confederate commanders, who, forgetting and forgiving the ancient quarrel, were loud in their praise of the man and the soldier.

Senator Butler, of South Carolina, says: "I should have great pleasure in being present at your interesting ceremonies, whereby you propose

to do honor to the memory of one of the ablest of American soldiers." Senator Withers, of Virginia, who had been a Confederate general, said: "The occasion is one of great interest to all who admire manliness and courage, unselfish devotion to duty, and military genius of the highest order." The Governor of Alabama writes: "It was my fortune to fight on the other side, but I none the less appreciate the devotion and sacrifices of the humane soldier, and am none the less proud of his splendid deeds of endurance and daring."

Later, the Confederate Colonel Archer Anderson, in an address delivered in Richmond before the Army of Northern Virginia, on October 22, 1881, highly eulogizes "this distinguished Virginian, George H. Thomas, who was at the head of a corps," and declares that while "there have been times when a Virginian might not be trusted to speak impartially of this famous Virginian, sixteen years have assuaged the bitterness of civil strife so that justice may be done him." General Dabney H. Maury eulogizes him, and General David H. Hill says that Thomas gave the death blow to the Confederacy at Chickamauga.

Perhaps the tribute of General Anson G. McCook, the orator of the occasion, was at once the most just, splendid, and enthusiastic eulogium that found utterance at that time. These are his closing words: "His patriotism was not circumscribed by

the narrow limits of his native State, but it was as broad and catholic as his own great nature. Virginia, the mother of States and statesmen, has been the birthplace of many whose fame and virtues are the common heritage of the republic, but the State of Washington, of Jefferson, of Madison, of Marshall, and of Scott never brought forth a nobler son, a better citizen, a truer soldier, or a more unselfish patriot than George H. Thomas."

The bronze statue was erected in the fine open space at the intersection of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont Avenues, and Fourteenth and M Streets. The eloquent presentation address was made by the Hon. Stanley Matthews, and the statue was received for the nation by the President of the United States.

By special invitation of the Society, General Garfield delivered at Cleveland, Ohio, a memorial address on his life and achievements, in which he dwelt particularly on the service he knew best, for he was with him then at the battle of Chickamauga. Everywhere his death was regarded as a national calamity.

The author's task has come to an end. A fuller life might have been written, but the purpose of this work is not to give details of his actions so much as to combine statistics with the object of drawing conclusions as to his character and merits. It is intended as a miniature of the man. If the great

deeds and high character of General Thomas, as attempted to be delineated in this volume, do not fully bear out the conclusion just enunciated, the fault must be in the author.

His personality at the opening of the war has been already portrayed. He grew with its continuance in power, virtue, and excellence. He was modest and retiring, but firm and exceedingly independent. Always a man of refinement, he was no anchorite, but lived well in his campaigns, having perhaps a better appointed train of creature comforts than many of his companion generals; he was not abstinent but temperate, and kept a camp establishment such as Marmont prescribes for his model general "who fulfills all the conditions of command": "He should constantly dispense hospitality. Never should an officer come to his headquarters on service without receiving due recognition and kind reception." He kept a good military household, and all who came were made comfortable. He had a naturally high temper, which he kept under good control. When it did explode it was to denounce injustice and unmanliness wherever it appeared; he was at once an exemplar and a judge. Firm in the Christian faith, he did not flourish his opinions before the world, but kept them for his own self-communings—a sacred secrecy which his biographer must not invade or speculate upon.



There is little to be added to the record of his character and his fame. He scorned the very first glimpses of sordidness and greed, and denounced them in unmeasured terms. Although not a rich man, and although he considered, be the truth what it may, that his services had not been properly appreciated and remunerated, he constantly refused to receive presents from any source, although others were receiving them, and when it was not considered wrong to accept them. Grateful citizens of wealth were offering to distinguished defenders of the country houses, ready money, and all sorts of gifts. He was particularly sensitive on that score. Just as the war was coming to a close, a number of his admirers found no difficulty in making up a long purse to buy him a house in Cincinnati, as houses had been bought for distinguished generals in other cities. As soon as he heard of the project he nipped it in the bud, declaring to those who had it in hand that nothing could prevail upon him to accept such a present, but that if they wanted to make good use of the money they might distribute it to needy widows of soldiers who had died during the war.

When in the month of May, 1869, he was about to leave Louisville in order to take command on the Pacific coast, another opportunity of showing his objection to receiving gifts presented itself. Just at the close of the war a considerable number of officers of the Union army, who had resigned or

been mustered out of service, had taken up their residence in Tennessee and the Gulf States. During the brief but stormy reconstruction period they had a hard time, not only being socially ostracized but treated with injustice, and even with contumely. General Thomas took their part, protected and supported them, and made it possible for them to retain their residence until the evil days were over. When he was about to leave they wished to acknowledge his kindness by presenting him with a handsome service of silver. It was purchased at Nashville, and the pieces were marked with his name. The committee, proud of their duty, presented themselves at his office and were about to offer him the service. "He firmly declined," says his aid-de-camp, Colonel Kellogg, "to accept it, and, as I thought at the time, with considerable and unnecessary asperity; but the would-be donors, knowing his characteristic in that particular, did not take offense at it, but seemed rather amused that he should even refuse to be the recipient of a testimonial from those whom he had practically benefited." And so they went back with the silver, and nobody knows what became of it. He used to say quietly but firmly on such occasions that he was satisfied with his pay, and could live on it. In this respect he was one of the few exceptions to the almost universal custom.

The occasions of self-sacrifice which kept him at his post while other officers were taking leaves were

very numerous, but he never made a display of his devotion to duty. His conduct in this regard may be epitomized thus: He never crossed the Ohio River to go northward from September, 1861—just before the battle of Mill Springs—until the winter of 1865, and during that period he was constantly with his troops and in the presence of the enemy. This is an unparalleled record. He never laid his eyes on his wife from August, 1861—when he saw her for a day or two, before he went southward, at New Haven, Conn., where she was spending the summer—until he sent his aid-de-camp, her nephew, to bring her to him in Nashville, in October, 1864, while he was preparing for the great conflict at that place. Mrs. Thomas remained one month with him at Nashville, when he sent her North again, while he remained to fight the great battle there, which proved him to be second in ability to no general the war produced.

It may give a clew to his views as to the subject of slavery that while in Texas, where it was difficult to hire a servant, he bought a negro woman to act as cook, and felt that he was doing violence to no principle in that; but when the question came up as to what he should do with her when he no longer needed her service, he could not bring himself to sell her again, but made such dispositions for her future comfort as were required by the new order of things. He evidently felt that as her master, and

after the war her protector and that of her husband and children, he could see that she was treated kindly and justly. But to sell her again would have risked the chance of her falling into cruel hands, and this suffering he would not expose her to. The distinction is a nice one and fully accords with the view of slavery which he afterward set forth, and which men like Randolph of Roanoke and other such liberal spirits had held for a long time previously, viz. : To hold the slaves who had fallen to their inheritance, to treat them with humanity and kindness, never to sell one, and to manumit them at the death of the owner.

A distinguished war correspondent—not, however, himself a soldier—has made the following distinction between Thomas, Sherman, and Grant: that Thomas was a tactician, Sherman a strategist, and Grant was both. We must dissent in part from this opinion. In the old times strategy meant the skillful direction of masses upon objective points. General Grant, to whom we have accorded a high place in both these characters, once said to a friend: “I don’t believe in strategy, in the popular understanding of the term; I use it *to get up as close to the enemy as practicable with as little loss as possible.*” “And what then, General?” “Then up, guards, and at ’em!”

That is the most practical explanation of modern strategy, and indeed is the best form which it ever assumes. Let us be technical and didactic in mili-

tary matters. Grand tactics is the bringing and the arrangement of men upon an extended field of battle, while tactics proper, or battle tactics, is maneuvering and fighting these men when they are brought there. In spite of his disclaimer, it was in strategy rather than tactics that Grant excelled. Without making odious comparisons, we are impelled to say that Thomas was great in all these methods. His conception of the campaign of Mill Springs at the beginning of the war, which would have been more complete if he had been permitted to take his own course; and his movement upon Nashville near its close, after leaving Sherman—with the intervening and temporizing battle at Franklin, displayed him as a strategist of no subordinate rank; while his matchless handling of troops at Stone's River, "where," in the words of Garfield, "he was the unmoved and immovable pivot around which swung our routed right wing," and when, the right having been scattered, he formed a new center upon which the army could rally; and his marvelous dispositions at Chickamauga, when he had been left with twenty thousand men to bear the repeated hammering assaults of sixty thousand flushed with success, and where he stood like a rock and saved the army, prove him to have been a master at once of grand and battle tactics, for that field was the rarest combination of both in military annals.

From his subordinate position in most of the

campaigns he had little opportunity except in the Nashville campaign to show what he was as a strategist; and so his record is that of a superb tactician handling troops on the field of battle, promptly meeting the enemy's unexpected movements, refusing his flanks when they were threatened, forming new lines when the first were untenable—in short, being ubiquitous, judicious, and coolly valiant in every action in which he was engaged.

While thus unrivaled as a tactician, he seems to have created opportunities which suggest his power as a strategist. The man who recast the field of Stone's River, who destroyed the scheme of the Confederates at Chickamauga, and conceived the campaign at Nashville, only needed opportunity to rank high in military annals as a strategist.

Something has been said as to his disappointment at being overlooked and held back for the benefit of others. It may be that he was a little morbid in this respect; if so, he only magnified to some extent a grievance which really existed. He had been looked upon with suspicion, and he knew it. He fought his way to eminence "without favor or affection" on the part of the Government; we leave the question of "partiality," unsolved. He told the literal truth when he said they gave him promotion which they dared not withhold, for he was one of the only generals of whom it could be said that he never had been defeated.

The story is told that once an officer said to General Joe Johnston—as has been said of others—that Thomas “did not know when he was whipped.” Johnston answered, “Rather say he always knew very well when he was not whipped.”

Despising politicians and frequently declaring that much of what the country was then suffering might be attributed to them, he never asked their aid in asserting his claims, as others did. It is a significant fact that he never saw Mr. Lincoln, for he never went to Washington after the war broke out until a year after it had come to an end.

A conqueror upon every battlefield upon which he fought, it may be said that he had not the opportunities of showing his highest talent. Every military problem thus far presented to him he had been able to solve, and behind every one of his great deeds there was a surplus of power that showed him capable of greater. Other men, full of impulse and impetuosity, dashed and failed, and dashed again. Thomas, moving more cautiously in order to be sure, did not fail.

In bringing his life to a close we find ourselves lingering over his many virtues; for great as he was in soldiership and generalship and in military administration of all kinds, we dwell with peculiar pleasure upon his self-respect, his clear sense of justice, his truth and honor, his modesty and humanity, and his moral purity.

The personal appearance of General Thomas has been already described at an earlier period of his history. We have claimed for him many of the moral characteristics of George Washington. Many have shared this opinion. General Jacob D. Cox, who was at Franklin and Nashville and who wrote a history of the campaign, says: "I have often said I looked upon him as the most Washingtonian character of our recent history."

General Garfield, in his memorial address, finds coincidences in the character of Thomas with Zachary Taylor and the Duke of Wellington, and then adds: "On the whole, I can not doubt that the most fitting parallel to General Thomas is found in our greatest American. . . . The personal resemblance of General Thomas to Washington was often the subject of remark. Even at West Point Rosecrans was accustomed to call him 'General Washington.' He resembled Washington in the gravity and dignity of his character, in the solidity of his judgment, in the careful accuracy of all his transactions, in his incorruptible integrity, and in his extreme but unaffected modesty." Thomas had also another personal likeness; a comparison of his portrait with that of General Scott in Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography can not fail to strike one with his resemblance to that great general. It is more than a martial likeness or a resemblance of distinguished Virginians. In the lines of the



face, the stern eyes, and the determined lips are found the indexes of a similar character within. Thomas Carlyle, in his quaint way, might have called him Washington-Scott, and the name would have been significant of his character; but his own name—George H. Thomas—is his surer passport to the temple of fame, in which, as in that “House” of Chaucer, he will be placed upon a pedestal of the finest gold.

When Professor Mahan, in 1870, announced to a section at West Point the death of Thomas, intelligence of which had just been received, he said that an attempt would be made to exalt General Lee by comparing him with Washington, but that the man of this war who approached nearest and very nearly to the character of Washington was George H. Thomas. Mahan had taught him as a cadet and followed his career with great and detailed interest.

One word in conclusion. The object of this book is to individualize Thomas, to display his characteristics, to eulogize his merits, and to present a sketch of the man as he stood and lived among men—the gallant and courteous gentleman, the cool and intrepid soldier, the determined and sagacious general, the honest and honorable man; but in such a work he would not wish the author to forget, had he the power to speak, the many brave officers and men who fought with him and under him and were contributors to his renown. Nor should we do so.

Most of the distinguished ones have gone like him to the spirit land. A few remain, and whenever memories of Thomas are recalled they stand around him in goodly numbers, both proclaiming his glory and, by their reciprocal admiration, adding to their own. Not one of them but is proud of the distinction of having fought with Thomas in the great war for the restoration of the Union, and they have imparted this spirit to those who come after, so that the reputation of Thomas, always great and unquestioned from the first, has found a larger area from year to year, and at the present time he stands in history without an enemy, with increasing hosts of friends, and with scarcely a critic of his high and honorable career.

The reader of this work will perceive that the controversies of all kinds connected with the career of General Thomas have been only referred to and considered in so far as they concern his character and conduct and affect his reputation as a general and as a man.

I have had two reasons for this course. The first is that in all wars many conflicting claims are set forth, and the claimants are championed according to their importance by friends and followers who become partisans. To enter into this region is hopeless, and the philosophic historian keeps as far as possible out of it, only singling and succoring his hero and hurrying him through the hurly-burly at

as fast a pace as is warrantable. The second and stronger reason is that the high and noble career of George H. Thomas is in itself the best answer to all critics and cavilers.

Since I have undertaken this task I have been surprised to find what a universal sentiment there is in his favor. Conceding the great fame of Grant, there are few now who share his opinions of Thomas. The jargon of voices which hounded him at Nashville has now no supporters, and if we may consider Messrs. Nicolay and Hay as echoing the voice of Lincoln, it is manifest that that illustrious man did not share the opposition to Thomas of Halleck, Stanton, *et id genus omne*.

Thus, while the opponents are rapidly disappearing and have long been silent, there cluster around the august form of Thomas a splendid body guard of champions, not only from the Army of the Cumberland and the Military Division of the Mississippi, but from every Union army in the field during the war, and from a number of Confederate generals against whom he was pitted in battle and are now loud in honoring his renown.

Not among the least of his claims to greatness is the stern and uncompromising faith with which he kept his own name and fame. While he was slow to think any man his enemy, since he gave no reason for enmity, when injustice was clearly intended he denounced and resented it.

It should be added that he was always punctilious with regard to the reputation of others—a fact which is clearly to be discerned in all his reports, in which those who were his superiors or his subordinates were always treated with justice and generosity, the orders and instructions of the former being distinctly mentioned and the heroic actions of the latter cordially presented to the authorities who could reward them.

While the purpose of a biography should need to present the subject of it in his completeness, not only as a hero but as a man, the special duty of a military biographer is manifestly to analyze his character as a soldier and as a general. Even at the risk, therefore, of some repetition, it is deemed proper to summarize the great actions through which his reputation was achieved, to value and weigh his successes, to follow his trains of thought and consider his plans of action, to note whether the issues were the just consequences of his projected purposes, to give just weight to his failures and disasters, determining impartially to what extent he was responsible for them; finally, to make up and systematize in one clear view the completed work of his life. Let us attempt this with what conciseness is possible.

General Thomas was an educated soldier in Government service; his loyalty was due to his Government, but he was also a Virginian, and in those stormy times many thought his allegiance was due

to Virginia. He remained true to the Government, although he was reviled by the South and suspected at the North. He bore both forms of injustice equably, but he felt them both, and by brooding upon them became naturally somewhat morbid.\*

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\* The following communication from the Hon. Thomas L. James was received after the first portion of this work was printed ; it has a clear and dramatic interest : " Returning from Cleveland on the train from the dedication of the Garfield Memorial, in May, 1890, Mrs. James and myself found ourselves in company with General Sherman as a fellow-traveler. During the journey General Sherman conversed freely of the different commanders whom he had known, both on the Union and Confederate side, placing Johnston and Longstreet at the head of the Confederates. After speaking of Grant, Sheridan, McPherson, and others in the highest terms, he said that, after all, in many respects Thomas was a typical soldier. ' Old Tom,' he said, ' as we always called him, was a classmate of mine at West Point, and was always a thorough gentleman, thoughtful and respectful of other people's feelings, and who knew not only how to command but how to obey.' He then told us this story of the way Thomas was made a brigadier general. He said : ' Mr. Lincoln, in the early part of the war, sent for me to come to Washington. While there he did me the honor to consult me regarding the names of those he intended to nominate to the Senate for brigadier generals. After hearing the proposed list I said to him, " Why don't you nominate old Thomas ? " His reply was that Thomas was born in Virginia, and there were some doubts as to his loyalty. In my most earnest manner I protested indignantly against this most cruel accusation. I said : " Mr. President, Old Tom is as loyal as I am, and as a soldier he is superior to all on your list." Mr. Lincoln said, " Will you be responsible for him ? " and I unhesitating replied, " With the greatest pleasure." The President instantly sent his name among others to the Senate. In the afternoon of that day I went to the Senate Chamber to see my brother, John Sherman, of Ohio, and he told me of the names on the list of brigadier generals that had been sent to the Senate, and said they had all been confirmed, Thomas

Pursuing the even tenor of his way, he displayed from time to time his wonderful military talent, and thus slowly disarmed Government opposition. At Mill Springs he won the first considerable victory

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with the rest. I then began to recollect that I had not seen Thomas for twenty years, and I had become responsible for him. It was a hot day, and the thing so worried me that I went to the War Department and asked where Colonel Thomas, now brigadier general, was to be found. I was told, in Maryland, some eight or ten miles from the city. So I ordered a carriage and started at once, my anxiety to see him impelling me to urge the driver to make as rapid time as he could. When I arrived at the place I inquired where Colonel Thomas was; and the sergeant of the guard went with me to Thomas's tent, and found that he was in the saddle superintending some movement of the troops. Controlling my impatience, I waited in no easy frame of mind, that sultry day, for his return, and as there is an end to everything, Thomas came back at last and we greeted one another heartily. "Tom," said I, "you are a brigadier general." "I don't know of any one that I would rather hear such news from than you," he replied. "But," I said, "Tom, there are some stories about your loyalty. How are you going?" "Billy," he replied, "I am going South." "My God!" I exclaimed, "Tom, you have put me in an awful position; I have become responsible for your loyalty." "How so?" said he; so I related to him the conversation between President Lincoln and myself, when he leaned back, and remarked, "Give yourself no trouble, Billy; I am going South, but at the head of my men." And so he did, and no nobler man, no braver, better soldier, and no more courteous gentleman ever lived.'

"General Sherman then gave a very thrilling description of the battle of Nashville, which he said itself alone proved Thomas to possess all the qualities of a great commander. Mrs. James then asked him where he placed Hood as a soldier—if he ranked anywhere near Johnston and Longstreet. 'No, madam,' energetically replied General Sherman, 'I don't; still he always gave me a great deal of trouble and annoyance when he was in front of me. For, madam, there is no telling what such a fellow will do.'"

for the Union arms and showed a generalship and a spirit which gave new life to the hesitating loyalty of Kentucky and Tennessee. Ever constant at the post of duty, he did unknown and unnoticed work in repairs and expeditions with reference to supplies and communications beyond, perhaps, any other general of his rank in the service. Seeking no promotion, he showed his justice and generosity in declining it when it was thrust upon him at the expense of his friend and superior.

At the battle of Perryville he was in a post of entire irresponsibility, but at Stone's River he held the key of the field and really won the victory ascribed to his commander.

In the long delay after that battle, while others were on leave in a series of rotations, he kept at his post, and when the colossal campaign of Chickamauga was begun he was its controlling genius, the star actor in the magnificent drama, the rock which hurled the enemy's forces back in evaporating spray. In the siege and battle of Chattanooga, although in a subordinate position, he was equally distinguished. He counseled and conducted his army with great judgment and valor in the Atlanta campaign. Husbanding all his resources and resisting all clamorous importunities, he fought with resistless valor and achieved an unrivaled success at Nashville. Such is his favorable record as a general. What is there *per contra* to detract from it? It is a hard question

to answer. He was accused by his superiors of being too slow.

While it is easy to conceive of a more dashing man, of a light-hussar, Joachim-Murat sort of meteor upon the field, to my mind the possession of such qualities would have been injurious to his character, would have detracted from his solid merits. I can neither conceive of General Thomas other than he was, nor desire that he should have been other than he was.

The make-up of two such different kinds of character generally results in enormity. For his own wise reasons, God never makes perfect men, and so we rest satisfied with the great preponderance of excellence in our hero. It is a source of regret, but it is due to the peculiar character of the man, that the biographer is unable to find those incidents and anecdotes which, while they enliven the record, present the personality of the subject in a clear, social light. Most men have their moods as clearly distinguished as the sunshine and the twilight, and the little things that they do and say in these moods give great interest to the story of their lives.\*

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\* The following letter from General Van Vliet is in answer to a request for such details ; it came too late for earlier insertion :

“ WASHINGTON, D. C., *May* 10, 1893.

“ MY DEAR COPPÉE: I am in receipt of your letter of the 5th instant. I do not know that I can aid you much. All who are named in Thomas's letter, given on a former page, were classmates, and all are dead except myself—Old Van, as I was always called. Sher-



It was less so with Thomas than with any of our distinguished soldiers. Always serious and dignified, we look in vain for racy anecdotes and sparkling pleasantries from his lips. I have questioned many of those who knew him, but they have no stories to tell concerning him. Even where an anecdote seems

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man, George H. Thomas, and I arrived at West Point on the same day, and all three were assigned to the same room, on the south side of the old south barracks. A warm friendship commenced in that room, which continued, without a single break, during our lives. We were all three sturdy fellows, which prevented our being annoyed by older cadets. They commenced to haze us, as was the fashion of those days, but Thomas put a stop to it. One evening a cadet came into our room and commenced to give us orders. He had said but a few words when Old Tom, as we always called him, stepped up to him and said, 'Leave this room immediately, or I will throw you through the window.' It is needless to say that the cadet lost no time in getting out of the room. There were no more attempts to haze us. When we graduated we consulted as to the regiments we should apply for. The Florida war was then going on, and we all concluded that we would apply for some regiment then in Florida, for we all wanted to see some actual fighting, and if we did not go to Florida we should never see any; so we all joined the Third Artillery. History shows how near we came to the facts in our reasoning.

"Who the Democrat was I can not imagine. Job Lancaster was a noble fellow—six feet tall and large in proportion. He was killed by lightning while on a scout. He was standing up in his boat. Hébert was Governor of Louisiana. He stood at the head of our class. All whom you mention were splendid men. In Cullum's History of the Graduates of West Point you will find the history of all. Fifty-three years—over half a century—have passed since we separated at West Point, and, of course, one forgets many things in that time. . . .

"Yours very truly,

"STEWART VAN VLIET, U. S. A.

to promise something, we see that he at least took the matter seriously. Prominent among the insignia of the Army of the Cumberland was the acorn, and the story is told that General Thomas, who had given strict orders against foraging, caught an Irishman on the river bank with a pig which he had just killed. Bursting out with anger against this violation of his orders, he was about to consign him to the guard, when the Irishman turned to him, saying: "You see, general dear, he was eating our corps badge, and it was for that I killed him." The general pardoned him out of jealousy for the corps badge rather than from a sense of pity or the ludicrous.

No, the humorous side of Thomas's character was undeveloped, or at least no appearance of it is made to his biographer, however careful his search has been.

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